

# Horizon

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

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**ON LEAVING MIND OUT**

*by C. E. M. JOAD*

**LIBYAN DIARY—II**

*by CECIL BEATON*

**THE TWO AMERICAS**

**(i) THE WIDE NET**

*by EUDORA WELTY*

**(ii) SOIRÉE IN HOLLYWOOD**

*by HENRY MILLER*

**REVIEW** *by JOHN POPE-HENNESSY*

**POEMS** *by K. J. RAINES and LYNETTE ROBERTS*

**REPRODUCTIONS OF DRAWINGS**

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**FEBRUARY VOL. VII, No. 38 1943**

***Edited by Cyril Connolly***

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# HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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## COMMENT

IT is time to bring up once more HORIZON'S most lost of lost causes. 'Why not war writers?' Readers of the January and February numbers will be enjoying Cecil Beaton's *Libyan Diary*. It has a quality which is not to be found in any newspaper account of the Eighth Army, that of sensibility. No fighting is described in it, but it gives a picture of what life with the Eighth Army is really like which cannot be made up from airgraphs, cables, or reporters' stories. How wise to have sent him out there!

But Mr. Beaton was not sent to Libya as a writer. He went as a photographer. We owe these articles in HORIZON to an accident. Mr. Beaton is a photographer who can write. This official camera-man has a parlour-trick, and as even in the desert one cannot take photographs all day long, he was able to indulge his hobby. The result is that readers of HORIZON (which, aware of Mr. Beaton's peculiarity, had asked him for a report) are able to get a picture of the war that is written for them and not for the millions of newspaper-readers who have time only for as much incident as they can pack into their after breakfast cigarette.

Now let us suppose we lived in a world that had suddenly gone mad. Imagine (nothing is impossible to the imagination) someone in authority reading HORIZON. Imagine him not only enjoying Mr. Beaton, but realizing that his chronicle had quite exceptional importance because it would keep. (The idea of something written lasting—what audacity!) Suppose this high personage also possessed a sense of logical analogy. He has been to one of the war-artists' exhibitions and seen the efforts of painters like Bawden, Ravilious, Piper, Sutherland, to give permanent value to what they have seen; he reasons thus: 'These artists are recognized by the War Office, they are privileged and mobile people—like photographers. But if my intuition of this morning is correct, and writing can be permanent too, then there must be some writers who could be doing the same kind of thing. They shall do it.' A question in the right place, a memorandum or two, a few committeees, a series of lunches, a Turn-over in *The Times*, a well-placed bribe (a case of champagne or a bound volume of the *Spectator*), some button-holing in the Travellers' Club, or the Jamboree, an insolent and

well-turned paragraph from *Strategicus*, *Scrutator*, the *Londoner*, *Umbilicus*, *Liberator* and *Patum Pepperium*, a cry, 'Why Not War Writers?' taken up wherever free men are dining for victory —thus the great machinery is set in motion.

The original plan failed—if such a dignified word as failure can be applied to the total indifference with which it was received —because *HORIZON* pleaded the case for allowing young writers, those who were already called up, to be given special opportunities for writing books about the war-effort. We realize that this was a hopeless request, and now make a modified one. Let some of our older writers be given facilities to establish themselves in such countries as are being reclaimed by our victorious armies, Tripoli, Algeria, Morocco, and, we hope soon, Tunis, and let them absorb the atmosphere, consider the problems and eventually produce their books about it. There is Norman Douglas, whose *Fountains in the Sand* is the best book about Tunisia. He is seventy and will not be called up for some months. There is E. M. Foster, the authority on Alexandria. There are the Sitwells, Richard Wyndham, Elizabeth Bowen, to mention some of our best descriptive writers and travellers who are too old for military service, but who in the topsy-turvy world of letters are still considered in their prime. Put them down in the sun and let them be: results will soon follow. And why not a poet attached to each army? Horace was the first to point out that many brave men lived before Agamemnon, but that all were overwhelmed in an unending night, unwept, and unknown, because they lacked a 'vates sacer', and the Librarian of Congress has noticed this of cities too.

'When the towns go down there are stains of  
Rust on the stone shores and illegible  
Coins and a rhyme remembered of

swans say

Or birds or leaves or a horse or fabulous  
Bull forms or a falling of gold upon  
Softness . . .  
Do they think

Town

They must rhyme your name with the name of a  
Talking beast that the place of your walls be remembered?'

KATHLEEN RAINÉ

# NEW YEAR 1943

Stairways into space, and windows into sky,  
And the tear-wet streets, with cloud-torn moonlight shining,  
Ways underground are open, and the trains are running  
Oh to what end, in this dream-entangled city?

The streets were full tonight  
With the dense human darkness—noisier  
With the talking of feet, and laughter,  
Night-cries of 'Taxi', and the flagging light

Of men and women walking in their thought  
Like ghosts in overcoats and uniforms,  
Their bodies, grown invisible, scarcely felt,  
Alone, or mated, in the London night.

You meet them everywhere—their touching hands,  
Fingers made intricate with bones and nerves,  
Playing like birds; or hanging still in sleep  
Though eyes are open, while men's thoughts run deep.

Oh where, into the night, into the underground  
Into the sky, into dark seas, do they go,  
The young boys who flash torches in the dark  
For their sweethearts in mimic dress, the counterpart  
Of war, the service-girl, the glamour-girl, the tart?

Girls' hair, like florists' flower, and coloured lips and eyes  
In farewell greet the RAF's young heroes,  
Gauche in the close-up of love, and close-up death—  
Never in meagre childhood taught how to die, and kiss.

They stray, enchanted, in this crumbling city,  
Where the safe homes of childhood house the winds,  
Through whose uncertain present lies our way  
To love, to death, our certainty, our strangeness.

# LYNETTE ROBERTS BROKEN VOICES

Here a perfect people set—on red rock,  
White and grey as gull met  
Pure to plough, each prince hamlet  
Of slate clear as rate ticket.

Now one mouth twisting twelve tongues—of the flock  
Unlocked the padlocked lungs:  
Slung a trail of steaming dung,  
Blocking path of two not sung.

Stained virgin village with dearth—for the mock  
Like strumpet jet, rocked mirth  
And farmer: brought no more worth  
Than winding sheet of sour berth.

When gossip kneads to grave crust,—with feared shock  
Runs into fox of dust,  
Then shall the two souls discussed  
Remain bold with new sung trust.

C. E. M. JOAD

# ON LEAVING MIND OUT A REPLY TO ARCHIMEDES

MUST not allow my respect for an appetite which embraces in a four course meal the origins of the stellar universe, of life in general and of human life in particular and of mind; the nature of human societies, the laws which condition their growth and the actors which determine human history, not to mention an outline of the post-war world and a prophecy of the future of capitalist society thrown in as a *bonne bouche* at the end to whet

the appetite for more—I must not, I say, allow all these good things to blind me to the intellectual sleight of hand with which Archimedes introduces life and mind on to the cosmic stage under cover of the conjurer's handkerchief, while the attention of the audience is otherwise engaged. I want to try and expose the trick.

The relevant passages will be found at the beginning of Article III, which appeared in the October number of *HORIZON*. They represent four stages of argument, or, rather, of assertion, which, to refresh the reader's memory and my own, I propose briefly to summarise.

#### STAGE I

##### *The Origin of the Universe*

Observation and inference show that 'the heavier atoms are not being made now and that the stars and galaxies were once far closer together'. In fact, the heavier atoms are breaking down and the stars and galaxies are rushing apart. These processes, processes of disintegration and dispersal, are, so far as we know, going on everywhere, the contrary processes nowhere.

Archimedes, who, it will be remembered, is purporting to sketch as complete an outline of the universe as the present state of our knowledge justifies, surmises 'the previous existence of a more concentrated universe in which the first atoms were built out of lighter units'. His method is, then, to explain this universe by postulating an earlier one. Confronted with the question, 'What is the origin of the universe which we know?' Archimedes invokes, by way of explanation, another universe which we do not know. Does this other universe present a problem? Not apparently to Archimedes, for nothing more is said about it. This is a brilliant example of the method, with which science has made us all too familiar, of solving a problem by the simple device of putting it back in the point of time and substituting another problem for it.

'What,' we ask, 'is the explanation of Universe A?' Answer, Universe B.

'And of Universe B?' We are not told, and apparently must not ask.

I suggest that this is no explanation at all. The problem, an old one, familiar to every student of philosophy—though not

apparently to Archimedes—is the problem of the First Cause which Leibnitz adduced as one of his arguments for the existence of God.

Let us assume that every event has a cause. We are, then, carried back by our assumption through an infinity of causes—to what? Either to a first cause, a cause, that is to say, which is itself uncaused, and this, it would seem, must be a mind—a mind and not a piece of matter, since, (i) though an uncaused material event is an outrage to science, uncaused mental occurrences are part and parcel of what is entailed by the concept of free will; (ii) though the notion of a piece of matter existing either eternally or outside time is again an outrage to science (is not all matter in a constant flux of change?), there is no particular difficulty about the *conception* of a mind existing eternally or outside time, though there is no *empirical* evidence for it—or to an eternal recurrence of universes repeating themselves indefinitely. Archimedes does not mention this latter possibility, and does not, I infer, entertain it.

We fall back, then, on the first alternative, that of a mind which produced and concentrated the energy which formed 'the odd hundreds of stable atom nuclei'. This, by any unprejudiced reckoning, would seem to be the most likely hypothesis on the evidence. For what is the situation to be explained? I hope that the scientific austerity of Archimedes will not be affronted by my attempt to convey it by an analogy, especially when I assure him that it was first suggested, unless I have dreamed it, by Bertrand Russell. Let us suppose that somebody were to shake a blob of ink from a fountain pen into a tumbler of water; the ink initially concentrated in a single spot would gradually diffuse itself through the water, so that beginning with a tumbler of water containing a concentrated drop of ink, we should end with a tumbler containing an equally diffused mixture of ink and water. A person observing the process of diffusion going on everywhere through the contents of the tumbler, but observing no single case of the reverse process, would naturally conclude that somebody must, at some time or other, have shaken the ink into the tumbler.

The tumbler case affords a fairly close analogy to the cosmos case, since, in the latter no less than in the former, energy is being everywhere diffused but nowhere concentrated; and just

as in the case of a parcel whose contents were being scattered broadcast, one would naturally infer that somebody did the parcel up, so *prima facie* one would make a similar inference in the case of the cosmos. Why does Archimedes not draw this *prima facie natural* inference? Because he is under the domination of a dogma which tells him that mental occurrences are never primitive and fundamental, but always secondary, being, in fact, the by-products of material processes; that mind, therefore, is never cause but always effect, and that the alien, the unlike and the mindless everywhere underlies and conditions the friendly, the like and the 'minded'. Does he produce any evidence for this belief? Not a scrap; that is why I called it a dogma. I charge him, then, when confronted with the question, 'How do things come to be as they are?' with putting the cart before the horse, with trying, that is to say, to produce a mind out of already existing material forces and substances, when the natural inference from the evidence is to derive these from an initially postulated mind.

## STAGE II

### *The Origin of Life*

'Chemical substances derived from the sea and a primitive atmosphere' are 'formed by the synthetic action of solar radiation.' The reactions of these substances to one another increase in complexity and are presently found to be 'cyclical and indefinitely repeatable'. 'Here, in effect,' says Archimedes, 'is the origin of life.'

Three further factors are introduced. First, there are stability and 'stereotypisation' in the processes by which these 'chemical associations' reproduce themselves. Secondly, there is incorporation by 'the associations' of progressively increasing quantities of the 'chemical environment'. Thirdly, at some point in the process protein molecules are built up. These 'carry electric charges and react to the electrical charges in the environment in a way that provides the basis for sensation and movement'. Hence 'the understanding of bio-chemistry is the unravelling of the origin of life'.

The assurance of these assertions carries them beyond the reach of mere vulgar argument. I confine myself, then, to a couple of questions. First, conceding—and who is a philosopher

that he should have the knowledge to justify him in withholding the concession?—that *animated substances* are built up in this way, why should we suppose that the processes involved in the building up, that is to say, processes which are resolvable into reactions between chemical substances, constitute the *origin* of life? What is described to us is the chemical structure and formation of the substances that life animates and the nature of the chemical processes through which living matter passes, processes which may, for all I know, be distinctive of living matter. But to *identify* these processes with life is not only to beg the question at issue, but to steal the answer; as well say that a man who built a house also created the tenants who proceed to occupy it. Suppose, for example, that I were to point out that what had been described were the conditions which must be satisfied in a material structure before life could animate it, I, for the purpose of my supposition, conceiving of life and its mode of interaction with matter (these analogies must be pardoned; they are, of course, only analogous) after the model of an electric current that runs down a wire, but is not the wire—suppose, I say, that I were to make some suggestion of this kind, what scrap of evidence does Archimedes produce to justify him in gainsaying me? In the absence of such evidence, I am constrained to conclude that what Archimedes has done is to specify the nature of the material substances as, for example, that they contain a high proportion of protein molecules, in which life appears, and the nature of the chemical processes, as, for example, that they are cyclical and stereotyped, which are life's invariable material conditions and accompaniments, but not the nature or the origin of life.

Secondly, what is meant by saying that the reaction of one electrical charge to another is 'the basis for sensation'? The statement is, in the highest degree, ambiguous. If it means that the reaction *is* the sensation, then it is difficult to deny oneself the pleasure of asking Archimedes, 'How can electricity feel?' or, more precisely, 'How can the reaction of one charge of electricity to another feel?' I should have supposed that only minds could feel. If, however, sticking closely to Archimedes's question-begging language, we say that the reactions are the *basis* of the sensation, then it turns out that all that we are being told is that, when certain electrical charges are found to react in certain

ways to other electrical charges, mental phenomena *accompany* the reactions. In other words, it will be found that Archimedes has again specified the conceivably invariably accompanying conditions of life; he has not succeeded in referring to life itself.

### STAGE III

#### *Evolution*

Life, we are told, once it had 'got hold of the world . . . produced new instabilities, but now these were inside the field of life itself'. The meaning of this is obscure, but some light is thrown by the later statement, 'the primary source of novelty was inside the living forms themselves'.

What is this novelty? I don't know, and suspect that Archimedes doesn't either. Is it just an effect following on and determined by the conditions which produced it, according to the ordinary mode of material causation? Presumably not; no need to invoke the word 'novelty' for the movement of the billiard ball as the result of the impact upon it of another billiard ball. Is it, perhaps, an uncaused event and is it creativity that is thus being surreptitiously slipped in under the guise of novelty? But what place, one wonders, is there in Archimedes's universe for uncaused events, while to admit creativity, the bringing of something out of nothing by an act of creative will, would be to give the whole of Archimedes's game away.

Presumably as one of the novelties, a new word is presently slipped in, the word 'need'. 'The need for food', we are told, 'led in one direction to the mobility of animals.' I confess this baffles me. Animals, we are told, are complex chemical structures, reacting to other chemical structures, and that is all that they are. Can a group of chemicals feel 'need'? I can't conceive it doing so; I can conceive a mind doing so, and I can conceive that a mind animates a chemical structure, but, as yet, there has been no mention of minds in Archimedes's narrative. But worse than 'need' is 'difficulty',—worse, since, though one might, I suppose, by some stretch of metaphor, picture the absorption by one chemical structure of another chemical structure out of its immediate environment as being prompted by or expressing the 'need' for that other chemical structure, the envisaging of a 'difficulty' is, I should have thought, precisely the sort of thing that an intellect, and only an intellect, does. Do chemical structures, then, have intellects?

Presumably they do, since in the next paragraph Archimedes informs us that 'more complex sexual systems of reproduction arose from the difficulties of producing a viable small original which had later to develop in size and complexity'. 'The solution' to these difficulties, he continues, 'was found in the elaboration of tubular and branch structures in both animals and plants. . . . A little later a new problem presents itself, that of 'directed mobility'. This, we are told, 'solved itself' by the 'specialization of chemical receptors' which, however, in their 'turn presented problems of co-ordination of sensation and movement'.

Now difficulties, I suggest, are felt by minds, solutions are found by minds, problems exist for minds and are presented to minds; whereas chemicals do not feel difficulties, are not aware of the presentation of problems and do not find solutions for them. At this point, then, I find it impossible to resist the temptation of asking Archimedes where his 'minds' come from, and how and at what point they are introduced? Are they, perhaps, to be numbered among the uncaused 'novelties', or are they there from the very first, or were they smuggled into matter at some point in the course of its development? In the absence of any satisfactory answer to these questions, I must ask Archimedes what on earth he means by using such words as 'difficulties', 'problems' and 'solutions', which can only have meaning in a world in which mind or minds are already at work, planning and guiding the evolutionary processes along definite lines in the direction of foreseen and desired ends. I put to Archimedes this dilemma: either at Stage III mind is at work in his universe or it is not; if it is, I want to know how it got there; if it is not, why does he use expressions which are only meaningful on the assumption that it is?

The truth is, of course, that mind is *there* in Archimedes's universe, and *there* from the first, but that the official ban on mind prevents him from recognizing, or countenancing it, the official doctrine to which he subscribes as an article of faith being, as I have already pointed out, that mind is not primary, but is the by-product of chemicals which are primary. The trouble about this doctrine is that with the best will in the world Archimedes simply cannot consistently keep it up, and is continually betrayed by the facts which he has to account for into using expressions to which he has no right, which on his assumptions are strictly meaningless and which indicate the repeated and surreptitious introduction

through the back door of the mental factor which Archimedes has ceremoniously kicked down the front door steps.

I conclude my examination of this stage by pointing out that once again the cart has been put in front of the horse, this time with such glaring inappropriateness that Archimedes every now and then forgets the fact and is betrayed by his unconscious feeling for intellectual propriety into talking as if the horse were in its *natural* place.

#### STAGE IV

##### *Man and Society*

This describes the origin and distinctive characteristics of human societies; not, be it noted, of human beings, but of human societies. The distinction for Archimedes is important. The mediaevalists, he points out, thought that the characteristic that differentiated man from the animals was his possession of an *immortal* soul. They were wrong; but not more so than the materialists of the nineteenth century, who found it in man's superior brain. 'The real distinction,' says Archimedes, 'is not to be found in man, but in mankind, in human society, two characteristics of which are cumulative tradition and progressive domination over environment.' The doctrine is, then, that there is no important difference between men and animals, but that there is between groups of men and groups of animals. Again the cart precedes the horse. I cannot, for the life of me, see how a group of X's can differ from a group of Y's, except in so far as there is some prior difference between the X's and the Y's composing the two respective groups. Why should human societies be radically different from wolf packs or sheep flocks, unless there is some radical difference between men on the one hand and wolves and sheep on the other? Even if we say that man possessed initially the potentiality—or, if the expression be preferred, evolved the potentiality—for forming societies, and that animals did not possess it or evolve it, the presence of that potentiality constitutes a radical difference; indeed, this way of putting it is nothing but a long-winded way of saying that man has a social sense or, if Archimedes so prefers it, man evolved a social sense, and that animals *tout court* have not.

The point recurs in the next paragraph. A distinguishing characteristic of human society is, we are told, its incorporation

of the pattern of a continuing tradition into which every human being is fitted, and by which every human being is shaped. Features of the pattern are 'handling and gestures, then language, and later all the civilized elaboration of writing and radio', which are described as 'successive means for establishing and maintaining a continuous conditioning of human beings to society'. Language and writing, then, are functions of human society. But human society is a function of man. How, then, unless we are prepared to postulate that man is a radically different kind of creature to begin with—or becomes a radically different kind of creature through evolution—are we to explain the fact that he alone among human creatures speaks and writes? Archimedes suggests that man became different because of the social tradition to which he was exposed. He fails to see that initial difference is already presupposed in the formation of the social tradition. In other words, initial difference is logically prior to the development of such instruments of tradition as language and writing which are invoked to explain it. Wherein does that initial difference consist? I see no reason for following Archimedes in his refusal to accept the straightforward answer, which is that men have intellects and that animals have not.

#### CONCLUSION

All these difficulties arise from one fundamental difficulty, the difficulty, namely, of trying to explain the universe and leaving mind out of our explanation, or, rather, consenting to introduce it only as a late-coming passenger across an alien environment, who will one day finish his pointless journey with as little cosmic significance as he began it, and who is meanwhile wholly determined in respect both of his movements and his thoughts by the material structure of his conveyance.

Mind exists; the fact is obvious. What, then, are we to say of its origin and status? Archimedes, if I understand him aright, attributes its appearance to instabilities in and complexities of chemical structure. Mind, for him, emerges at a particular point of time, upon certain combinations of non-mental processes. The doctrine of emergence seems to me to be the disguised evasion of a choice, the choice between creativity and materialism. If mind *literally was not* in any of the constituents, so that the most exhaustive examination of the constituents could not have revealed

it before its appearance in the complex structure, then, when it does appear, it is literally new, is, that is to say, created. Archimedes obviously does not want a doctrine of creation on his hands, since created minds point suspiciously in the direction of an initial Mind to do the creating. So we will assume him to reject this alternative. Mind, then, we must now suppose, is locked up from the first in the chemical constituents whose combination it characterises. If this means that mind was always present in the universe, that it is, therefore, a fundamental and primitive factor in the world's make-up, well and good. That is what I think, but Archimedes will have none of it. I can see only one other alternative, and that is the old-fashioned materialist view that mind is simply a by-product of the functioning of material particles, a quality which, in certain conditions, characterizes their combinations, floating like the bright colours of an oil film upon the unresting waves of material substance, its function being to register or reflect the currents below the surface and the movements of the surface in which the currents express themselves. Consciousness, then, is a psychological correlate or reflection of the material particles composing the brain, and thoughts are the mirrors of the brain movements which produce them and to which, because they do mirror them, they refer. Possibly; possibly not. But, if so, then thoughts do *not* mirror or reflect the things to which the thoughts purport to refer. I like to think that I have been thinking about the universe, and my thoughts certainly *seemed* to refer to it; but, if this last alternative which I am suggesting for Archimedes is the right one, this belief of mine is a delusion. All that my mind really reflects is the movements of my brain and nervous system, of which its thoughts are the determined by-products. The same, I am afraid, is true of Archimedes's mind. Therefore Archimedes's thoughts do *not* refer, as he apparently supposes, to the universe, whose origin he purports to be describing. They only refer to his own body and brain. They don't tell us anything about the world; they do tell us something, though I am not quite sure what, about the condition of Archimedes's neural and cerebral system.

I don't believe a word of it.



Reclining Figure with Red Rocks. 1942. HENRY MOORE

*Collection : Sir Kenneth Clark*



Miners at work (1). 1942. HENRY MOORE

*(By permission of the War Artists Commission)*

CECIL BEATON

# LIBYAN DIARY

II

TOBRUK. Among a great number of ships in its blue harbour were the masts protruding ominously out of the water of others that had been sunk. Here was wreckage on a large and sinister scale. Nothing remains unscathed, but the hospital still stands, and the towers of mosque and church, curiously enough, still remain serene above the comparatively untouched debris of toppling walls. The streets in shambles, with blitzed cars, cycles, and lorries that have 'copped it' in transit, the wrecked fire station, and the alley-ways of shops creating extraordinary shapes and textures with roofs falling in and plaster remaining stuck in curious patterns to bent iron girders. The church itself is strangely smashed, the pink and blue angel with gold wings and an eye shot out, droops above the altar steps; behind her a grotto-like cavern, revealing a vista of trees and further ruined buildings of the town. The chandelier hangs lop-sided on one wire, much of the roof is blown away, though some of the rafters cast zigzag shadows on the battered walls. An English Tommy, knowing of the looting inside the church, has scrawled on the walls, 'Leave this place alone, there's been enough of destruction here without your adding to it.' Outside a Madonna topples at an acute angle in a determined effort to pray on a pile of rubble.

The General Hospital at Tobruk has suffered remarkably little from the bombing. At this time one of the senior surgeons, with the rank of colonel, a fair, good-looking sportsman, was bemoaning the fact that most of his cases were accidental. 'It worries me so much that there is this terrible waste going on all the time. The other day we had seventy-four cases all in at once, burns, very bad. But out of two hundred and twenty only three have died. That is because we have this new method of dealing with them. We reburn them with this silver nitrate. It used to be said that if one-third of a patient's body was burnt he could not survive the shock, but now with the present-day processes a man

can recover even if five-eighths of his body is burnt. The nitrate forms a skin, a coating that protects the nerves, and at the same time prevents the life juices from flowing out. Now let me show you this. Let's have a look.' The doctor bends over a shrouded figure. The doctor has tremendous enthusiasm, vitality and charm. Some of his remarks shocked me, but only because I was comparatively squeamish. 'Now let's have a look at you today.' He uncovers a body. 'Yes, you've got it badly, old son.' 'Of course that man represents a good deal of work. He's been a grand patient, taken it very well too. Four pints of plasma were pumped into him. The trouble is he need never have been burned; if it weren't for the presence of the petrol cans and the lighted cigarette he threw down.' The doctor passed down the ward, paused at one bed and explained: 'This man stepped on a mine, both arms and eyes were blown away, and a large lump right out of each thigh, yet he manages to live.'

We passed on to the next bed. 'Let's see what else we have here. Now this man here: what's the matter with him?' The doctor reads the advice contained in the envelope at the end of the patient's bed. 'The usual, another accident. You know, few of these are field cases. It's not as if a great offensive were on. The other day I went out for a bit, leaving that wing there quite empty. Suddenly they called me back. We were all keyed up, thought the great attack had started, but when I came in the ward was full of accidents, all unnecessary, the same hopeless cases of burns. Occasionally we get a man in from a tank that has been blown up. Then he's terribly burned about hands and face, but ninety-seven per cent of these accidents are avoidable. A man will pour petrol on the floor of his "tent" to get rid of bugs. He forgets he has done this, after a while throws down a cigarette end and the entire shoot goes up in flames.'

'Now from this man's history,' he read, 'Corporal Trevelyan was sitting smoking by a can of petrol. He threw down his cigarette end, the usual.' Corporal Trevelyan was now painted like a zulu, with his right arm aloft in plaster-of-Paris, his face a network of suppurating colours; he was too miserable to speak. We passed on, past people in various stages of woad and discomfiture, their bed-clothes stained with the bright blues and viridians that are the result of the reburning process by which the original burns are sealed.

A doctor began to discuss the supposed reactions to pain of the peoples he had come across. The English Tommy felt pain less than anyone else in the world. He said that next to him come the South Africans, then, in order, the Australians, the New Zealanders and Canadians, and most of all the Palestinians, who completely 'double-up'. The doctor said that in many cases his work consists solely in the sad task of seeing that the hopeless, helpless cases are allowed to die as carefully and as comfortably as possible. Many men from the front are unable to stand the jolting in the cars over these fearful roads, and others arrive hopelessly depressed. One man, with most of his inside hanging out, was brought to the resuscitation centre. This doctor knew his case to be beyond recall. The man panted from his stretcher, 'Oh! doctor! Oh! doctor! Do make me comfortable.' With tremendous conviction and enthusiasm the doctor replied, 'My dear boy, you've just come to the right place.' The man raised himself a little, said 'Oh, thank God!' and fell back dead.

The resuscitation centre is a corner of a ward, blanketed off with many oil stoves where the men can lie in warmth. The doctor told me about 'one patient who was not progressing at all well'. 'I got very cross with him. We didn't want to have another death and send up our averages.' This doctor was one of the great characters I have come across in the desert. It is difficult to convey the earnestness and smooth conduct and at the same time direct, unflinching, matter-of-fact quality that he possesses. In the way that friendships spring up so quickly in the desert we became great friends. Our party stayed with him as his guests in the hospital for the night.

The doctor's enthusiasm for me to photograph his various exhibits was almost alarming. He rubbed his hands. 'Splendid, Beaton! There's a great deal to show you; burns all the colours of the rainbow. But best of all, we've got in a field case. You are lucky, we've just received a South African, who was driving in a truck when a mine went off. We're operating on him to-night. Just you take your time, there'll be plenty for you to photograph there. We're having him X-rayed now. We'll start at nine o'clock.' He slapped his hands.

'You'll have dinner with us, of course, and then we'll go on together afterwards. Bring your camera and your drawing things and you'll get a grand opportunity. Meanwhile come and have a

shock injection.' While I drank a most welcome whiskey and water, the doctor talked about his work. 'When I go on leave I go further up to the front line. If I were to go back to Cairo or somewhere like that I'd find my place taken when I got back here, so many people are after it. I would like to be up in the front line all the time, but they can't spare me, I'm too valuable for such rough work. The doctors on the spot do things that have to be attended to immediately, or else the patient would be dead by the time he reached here.'

At dinner the doctors were very like any other mess inmates, cheerful, lots of local jokes. 'Let's go into the adjoining theatre.' About eight men in white overalls, their khaki shorts showing at the back, were pulling on rubber gloves; over their faces small squares of white linen were tied with white tape bows. My great new friend, the surgeon, was obviously disappointed that he himself was not to be performing the operation. 'You see, we take it in turns here,' he remarked. 'Major So-and-so is on tonight.' The curtain was about to go up. The results of the X-ray photographs were handed around. The colonel showed me the negatives, which were interpreted as revealing little bits of dispersed metal, but their whereabouts could not be gauged precisely. 'My God, you're lucky, Beaton. This'll be a wonderful opportunity for you. You can take your time, it's a big operation. May last an hour and a half, it all depends where we find the metal is lodged.' He wandered about with a fly whisk, talking earnestly. 'There's a fly!' Swat. He got it. If a fly were to alight on an open wound it might at least give a man dysentery. The others stand quiet and wrapped in attention. 'See this stuff,' the colonel continued. He blew some powder out of a rubber squirt. 'Well, its name is Sulphanilamide, and it's the most wonderful medical discovery since Lister, and since Pasteur discovered antiseptic and bacteria in 1865. Now you just put some of this in the wound and there's no chance of gangrene or any poisoning.' There is another fly. Got it. 'No, this stuff is extraordinary, you'll see Major So-and-so, the surgeon, will undoubtedly use it continuously during the operation.'

The patient was wheeled in on a stretcher. A South African of strong physique with olive skin, flashing eyes, and curly black hair. The doctors read his history. 'You were driving a truck and a mine went off, and your pal is all right, but you got it here in

the leg and in the arm and here! Where does it hurt?' The surgeon placed his gloved hand gently on the brown skin of the abdomen. 'Does that hurt?' 'Yes, Doctor,' said the man with an expression of disgust caused by the pain. 'Well, we will see what we can do for you.' Quickly the anæsthetist fixed a rubber mouth-piece over the man's face and soon he was breathing stertorously, his chest and belly heaving as he inhaled the ether and oxygen. The sound of his breathing was all that could be heard in this small white-tiled room. The breathing became desperate as air hunger increased. The patient's forehead began to sweat. Now he is unconscious, all is set. The body is molested. A nasty little safety razor begins to shave the torso. A bowl containing the wisps of hair is taken way: the body is now painted orange with iodine and the operation can start.

The lights are centred on the abdomen. The remaining parts of the patient are hidden beneath cloths, under towels. He sucks for air through the rubber mouthpiece which, connected by a tube, causes a glass cylinder of liquid to fill with bubbles at the out-take of each breath. The muffled whispers of surgeon and assistants are difficult to hear. A nurse, masked like the others of the Ku-Klux Klan, is busy with her tray of instruments, producing, one by one, the necessary knives or scissors. It is a serious business this, everyone looking on silently while the surgeon works. An assistant mops the surgeon's sweating brow. Soon a large slit has been cut down the outer gut and is held back to reveal the intestines. My friend comes up to me, and whispers, 'Don't hurry, Beaton. Take your time. He'll be an hour yet. It'll get much better later. If the metal has got into the intestines or liver it's a tremendous business with masses of blood everywhere.' The white figures hover. The patient breathes a little less desperately, and the anæsthetist changes over on his apparatus to gas and oxygen.

I concentrate hard on my drawing, yet I feel a little weak when looking up to see the surgeon's gloved hand penetrating down through the newly formed cavity deep between coils of entrail. 'Beaton, you're a lucky bloke and you've brought this man luck, too. He's one of the few lucky ones. The metal has got lodged in the kidney, where, perhaps, it'll form an abscess which can be dealt with later, but we're not going to do anything more now than sew him up. It may never bother him. If it does it won't be

anything of a job. The sewing-up will take nearly as long as the rest of the operation.' The brilliant lights shine down on to the dozens of silver pincers that stretch back the gaping chasm of the wound. One by one the nurse is handed back a pair which is forthwith placed into the sterilizer. The incision is now sewn up. The whole operation demands from those taking part (the victim, the surgeon, his assistant, and even the onlookers) the courage which we trust we possess, although tormented by an undercurrent of dread that such a crisis may disclose our weakness.

At the outset of this operation I felt weak and nervous, but now I found I could even enjoy the great drama. Now that the most serious part of the operation was over, the spirit and atmosphere changed in the operating theatre. The surgeon talked more freely, and his assistants offered comments and suggestions. Now the wretched victim's arm was to be the centre of attraction. The white figures altered their former composition as a group, and now some leant forward, holding the elbow into position while others retired from the ring of light. The blood flowed down the side of the stretcher, on to the surgeon's shoes and on to the floor. A thicker and yet bigger cavity was made in the search for the elusive metal in the arm. The vital operation over, this was but a 'side show', although it now became serious when the excavation must trespass so near to the joint. 'Hereabouts it becomes tricky in case he may not be able to use the arm,' my friend explained. 'The poor man will have a stiff arm for a bit, but that should be all right now.' The arm was squirted with this new discovery, and wrapped in bandages. The blood-stained things, and the support on which the wounded arm had travelled, were thrown into a bucket, and looked like an amputation.

'Now, what else?' What else is wrong with him? Serious grazes on hip and leg. Yes. Again the South African's dossier was read. 'The wretched man has had a bad "go" of it!' That is one of the bad things about this war, there are so many multiple wounds. A shell explodes and a man is lucky if he does not get hit in six different places, but we have much to be thankful for in this desert war. There are no horses, so we do not get cases of glanders. This arm has had to be explored very carefully for grit and bits of the road, but there are few camels about and so little chance of cases of tetanus. The body is turned over and scissors are applied to the skin. Another operation begins that takes much

time but is not grave. The strongest lights are turned off as the heat has become almost overwhelming. The surgeon and his assistants talk among themselves as they work now on this minor job. 'What sort of a time did you have on the hospital ship coming out?' 'Oh, I travelled like a lord, but it was slow, of course. Arrived at Suez. Got there just a year after a friend of mine came out, but he had had a bad time of it. He had retired, and no sooner had he come out than he got pneumonia. He died. I went to visit him, it took me a long time to find his grave.'

At last the South African truck driver is finished with. He is wrapped in layers of blankets, the mouthpiece taken from him. His face is sweating and white, his closed eyes weeping tears. The anæsthetist wipes his nose. Soon the patient makes spluttering noises like a baby in its cot. 'Now he's for the hot box,' says my friend. 'He'll be all right. He'll be heading for home in a hospital ship in thirty-six hours.' Men with leather yokes like those from which farmers hang the heavy pails of milk they carry, came in to bear away the stretcher. They move slowly and take the patient to a cave covered with an awning of electric lights. The victim is quite comfortable, but a man stands by 'in case'.

Now that it is successfully over all of us realize how drained of energy we have become. We retired to the Colonel's room to drink a night-cap. The young surgeon comes in, his shoes still witness of the operation he has so successfully performed. But the operation is now temporarily forgotten, as the doctors laugh and talk of more cheerful things. Meanwhile, here in the desert one more Tommy Atkins has been given the best treatment that could ever be bought in the most expensive nursing homes or hospitals throughout the world. Highly trained experts and specialists have sweated over him for an hour. So successful is their work on him that tomorrow's visits to him will be in the nature of a formality.

Life in this hospitable hospital in Tobruk seemed so stable and real, with solid floors and a roof over our heads, and breakfast 'on' in the dining room from seven thirty onwards. The comfort of washing in hot water, an unexpected treat, was much appreciated, and full advantage was taken of the brimming bowlful, Derek doing a particularly elaborate toilet which caused us to delay our departure. With regret I bid adieu to the nice surgeon, encouraged to realize that someone so delightfully

naïve and ingenuous should have come out of Harley Street and brought his great gifts to the desert.



It seems in order to visit a regiment in the desert it is necessary first to report at Corps Headquarters, then at a Divisional Headquarters before proceeding down the line to Brigade and on to the Battalion Headquarters. Our day was busily spent paying these various formal calls. With the aid of a compass we set sail into the desert on our rubber tyres. For most of the day we were surrounded by miles of scrub. We could see nothing on the horizon. Several times we stopped. My conducting officer did not seem too sure of his compass. He took our bearings again. He stood on the roof of our transport and scanned the distances through field glasses. Nothing in sight. We proceeded further. Again we stopped and peered. Yes, there's some sort of signpost there. He drove towards a mound of stones, a signpost, but on closer inspection found it to be without any markings to indicate our whereabouts. Further mathematical calculations were made, and once more we went on. We arrived eventually at a group of camouflaged, dispersed lorries, somewhere in what might be the centre of the desert. Yes, this is the 13th Corps Headquarters, a small unit of sophisticated young men with exaggeratedly cultured voices, whom one would expect to find in the quadrangles of Christchurch, or the bar at White's. 'Have a drink, have a piece of chocolate?' They made telephone calls to say that we were on our way to Division, and we set off again, heading for a point on the horizon that had no landmark. Again we stopped; a new reading of the compass taken. It appears that somehow the metal vibrations of our transport affect the true bearings of the compass. We start again. Suddenly our car crashes down at the back with a thump, followed by a grinding noise that continues until we stop dead. Violently we sounded the horn to let the accompanying car in front know of our plight. Dispassionately we watched it becoming smaller and smaller in the distance, unmindful of our signals.

The little Scotch driver, whose face, hands and trousers have now attained such a degree of dirtiness that the more he rolls in the sandy earth the cleaner he seems to become, was once more under the back wheels, his straddled legs all that could be seen of

him. 'Ai think it's a guruge jarb this taime.' But where was the local Lex's? Meanwhile our other khaki-coloured transport had missed us, turned back, and both the drivers now got together under the car, and pronounced the breakdown irrevocable. Someone must return to 13th Corps to telephone for assistance.

The hours passed, the sun was very strong and there was no shade except in the furnace of the car. Later we were relieved. The others came towards us. 'What news?' 'The rest of the journey must be made in the khaki lorry, while this car and the luggage is left here until the repair unit calls.'

Once more we rely on a small compass to take us across stony, scrubby bareness, and I felt sorry for the little Scotch driver, stranded, waiting alone in the desert.

We drove in a  $30^{\circ}$  direction for half an hour, but the desert is hard to navigate, and many things may send a compass out of gear. 'That looks like a camp over there. Get on the roof once more and look through the glasses. We should see something by now.' We drove on but again no luck. We drove in another direction. 'Well, perhaps they gave us the wrong instructions—' According to the advice at Corps we should have arrived at our destination by now. What are those little dots on the horizon? Are they boulders, hummocks of scrub, or tents?

Good, all ends well. We have come across a dispersed camp. Just to make sure that we are at our destination, the conducting officer drove up to a caravan to ask our position. To his surprise, humiliation and shocked embarrassment, he found he had bearded the Corps Commander, General Willoughby-Norrie, at his desk. It was just as if we had called by mistake at the wrong house in Charles Street and had been shown up to the drawing-room of a complete stranger, no, it was worse—it was as if we had interrupted Sir John Anderson at his work at the War Office. Many generals might have blown off a fuse at such an informal encounter, and stormed furiously about such things as bad navigation, but Norrie is said to be imperturbable. During the most fierce fighting in a former campaign—while things were going their worst for us—he continued to shave, saying 'It looks as if the relief of Tobruk is off for today.' Norrie, whose immaculate perfection of appearance gave one the impression that he had just fitted his uniform in Sackville Street, was amused by the situation of our arrival, and tried to put us at our ease and find out

our wishes. He introduced us to some of the men of the 7th Armoured Division, all wearing the Tank Corps beret, and passed us on to the care of his Staff Officers.<sup>1</sup> They were helpful and interesting. An officer explained, with a certain amusement, that one German prisoner was captured recently wearing nothing but a pair of short underpants. In explanation he said he was visiting a friend. It sounded rather equivocal.

A few of the German prisoners, after their capture, talk freely, voluntarily giving away much information that is useful and important. Have they the hope that by collaborating thus they will gain for themselves more respect from their captors, or better conditions? Perhaps they behave thus out of a desire to break any silence which might play havoc with their conscience? Other German prisoners, who have been primed with instructions as 'How to behave when captured', hand over their Pay Books and, having done this, refuse to allow another remark to pass their lips, except perhaps the compliment that the English soldiers are good soldiers and will not talk when they are taken prisoner, and that they, too, will prove that they are good soldiers.

However, the Hitler mystique has become so ingrained in many of the youth of Germany today that these young men are apt automatically to put up a bravura display of 'Heil' salutations, and in some instances their behaviour is of such an aggressive Nazi nature that the air is rent by their guttural shouts.

Most Germans have deeply embedded in their system a guilt complex. This feeling of guilt often asserts itself when prisoners are left to think for themselves and they find themselves alone, victims of their own mental fancies. If a Nazi allows himself to ponder on many events in which he has been conniving during the past four years, he is likely to become extremely uneasy. Every German has a conscience about Poland. If left to contemplate Warsaw and the subsequent treatment of the people of that country after her defeat, his mind cannot let him rest.

Working on this theory, the Poles have evolved many simple ways of subduing the more disorderly prisoners. These methods are humane, yet are more effective than would be threats or subjection to violence.

<sup>1</sup> It was past this particular point that a few weeks later two German columns moved at the outset of their attack.

In the desert, if a driver cannot reach his goal before nightfall, he remains in his vehicle parked by the side of the route. He knows the danger of aircraft attacking any moving light is too great for him to risk, so he sleeps until dawn lights him to his destination. Hans, a typical Prussian of the peasant class, decided to curl up behind a rock a few yards from the lorry in which the others were already asleep. Somehow, next morning, the others forgot all about Hans. The lorry drove on. Later Hans woke, to find himself, as far as he could see, alone in the desert. Well, he would walk to their lines, that's all. He walked, but in the wrong direction. He was captured. Struggling against his guards, Hans stamped, kicked and spat. He had refused food, or to listen to the suggestion that if he did not calm down this might be the last he would see of the English.

He wore the loose-fitting uniform and soft caskette hat that gives the slightly ridiculous impression, to all German soldiers, that they are sporting the feminine fashions of the last time that Germany brought us into war against her; clothes which, in 1916, were supposed to make women look *très garçon*. Clothes which comprised pantaloons skirts, or baggy Dutch-boy trousers, spats and a caskette cap on the head. Yet, it must be admitted, Hans managed to transcend his clothes and even to look massive and formidable as, with curling lips and thick chin, harsh with stubble, he found himself, like a bull released into the arena, baffled and solitary. His eyes blazed fire as he was transported in the open lorry, taken down a long corridor, pushed through an open door to find himself free and alone. The door shut behind him. He looked at his unmanacled wrists. He found himself in a large room with tall, bare walls. It was a cool room, and astonishingly quiet, but he saw that after all he was not alone. At a wooden table sat three men staring at him. He lunged towards them menacingly. Then he stopped in his tracks. In front of each man, on the table, was his hat. The prisoner looked with horror, and realized the hats were those of Polish officers. The three men in unbroken silence stared at the prisoner, who tried not to look at those hats, or at the eyes staring at him. Where could he look? There was no distraction. There was an awful silence, and the three officers continued staring. This was the first time Hans had been quiet. He did not relish the silence, yet he did not utter a sound, nor was a word spoken by those officers as they stared at him, their hats on the

table in front of them. The prisoner was haunted by those eyes and by those hats.

The Hitler myth, built on falsehood, is quickly shattered. Once a Nazi begins to doubt the inscrutability of the foundations of his belief he will crumble, like a pack of cards. The hysteria which has buoyed him for so long leaves him in an instant without anything to fall back upon. It is as if the ground caved in under him.

Hans was subdued. It was now only a few minutes before he quavered: his face twitched like an animal at bay: now his breakdown was complete. Like a blubbering child he collapsed, a quivering bully, on the floor. Hans had no more resistance. He had been brought to this condition of funk by the spectacle of those three Polish hats.



Again relying on our compass, we traversed a minute portion of the desert in an attempt to find the 4th Armoured Brigade, the famous 'desert rats', whose courage is famous even in this breeding ground of courage. Their General Grant tanks, built in America and adapted in England, are an impressive sight, and appear to be almost invulnerable. Inside them one has the feeling of security that a battleship must give.

It surprised me how intricate and delicate a mechanism is required for the running of these giant monsters. I had imagined that anything as cumbersome and unwieldy could be relied upon to bash its clumsy way through any obstacle of weather or temperature, and that, like a lorry, it needed only the pressing of the starter to get 'in motion' whenever required.

To start these caterpillar wheels an engine and steering unit driven by an air compressor is necessary, and the total cost of such a tank as this is £20,000.

Its crew is continuously at work on the maintenance and checking up of the functions of this complicated machinery. The stripping down, oiling and pulling through of its guns, the everlasting cleaning out of the sprockets, the tensioning of the tracks, searching for defective links, the care of the powered traverse, of the revolving turrets, the checking for oil, water and air leaks, testing and adjusting sights of gunners' telescope, these are only a few of the necessary jobs to be done before an

armoured fighting vehicle can go out prepared for battle. On their return, these men must at once start the refuelling and maintenance and restoring of ammunition before they can have a rest.

The storage of so much ammunition of various kinds, plus personal kit, necessitates an orderliness inside the tank that is as apple pie as in any ship at sea. It is little wonder that these men are proud of their tank, and endow it with a pet name and recognize its own personality. It is their toy. Their expensive present.

The success of the meals here in the desert depends almost entirely upon the ingenuity of the cook, for throughout the desert the ingredients are unvarying: bully beef, tinned potatoes, and tomato sauce. The clever disguise of bully beef is an incentive to good morale. Tonight it was made into pancakes and preceded by an *hors d'œuvre* consisting of two fronds of canned asparagus per person. In the tent, lit by small lights hidden in cigarette tins, we had a gay evening. Though we were in the front line we were given a really admirable dinner, with lots of gin and Vanderhumm. Brigadier-General Richards quoted the Arab saying, 'To the man who knows it, the desert is a fortress, to him that does not, it is a grave.' These men consider that it takes three months to become a 'desert worthy'. The Germans dare not go south of the Trigh-el-ad for they know they would get lost. Accordingly we can 'sit pretty'. Richards said that the importance of provisioning in the desert came in the order of ammunition, petrol, water and food.

They told us of many instances of people being unable to find their bearing and getting lost in the desert. One of their men wearing a Tanks Corps beret and unaccountably carrying a rifle, drove in circles for eighty-seven miles, then ran out of petrol. He walked for seven miles before 'getting taken in' (arrested) by our men in an infantry battalion.

During one of the fiercest battles, one of his fellow officers was heard telephoning, 'I am not where I thought I was, I am not where I told you I was. I'll let you know later where I am.' Later the same officer was heard saying, 'I'm not anywhere near where I thought I was when I last telephoned to you, in fact I don't know where I am, I only know I am somewhere in North Africa.'

These men seem to have more easy wit, sense of humour and intelligence than any that we have yet come across, and they are so

hospitable that one does not know what hospitality is until one comes to the poverty of the front line. The very people who are most short of water tonight insist on offering it magnanimously. So hospitable are they, in fact, that it is an unwritten rule that a guest should not arrive at an advance unit just before any mealtime.

I slept in a bivouac, in a trench dug a few inches deep but stupidly I could not manage to inflate my li-lo, and lay throughout the night uncomfortably on big stones, like Jacob. The night was cold, but in the morning I felt very well, in fact I have seldom been as healthy as I now am.

Next day we were off early. Our friends of last night, friendly and efficient, were already at work. Each moment of the day they are occupied and many return to work after their evening meal. It came as a pleasant surprise to me to discover how young were many of these officers who have already attained high rank.

We went now to the 5th Royal Tank Regiment, whose Colonel Uniacke is one of the best-looking men out of films, and more classical than Clark Gable. He said, 'It is interesting to realize that the enemy complains as bitterly as the English, who are known to be born grousers.' A captured German sergeant-mechanic had said, 'the whole boring war could just go hang as far as he was concerned, devil take the whole of Africa with its palm trees, all three of them.' One man had complained 'Never before has the German Army been subjected to such disgraceful dive bombing attacks as last night.' Later on he sighed, 'more dive bombing'. Another, after his first battle, was so terrified that he swore, perhaps rather unaccountably, that he would abstain for the rest of the war from sexual intercourse and alcohol. This proved to be true, for he was killed ten days later. Uniacke said the Germans complained a great deal about their army rations. A prisoner had admitted to having had such a pitiable hunger that he had eaten his ration for three days—'God knows what I'd have done if I hadn't been captured,' he had said.

An Italian, one Lieutenant Tardini, had said, 'We are not cheered by what we hear. Once again, even in this field, there is complete lack of preparation for a long and hard war, one perhaps of doubtful outcome, in spite of the valour and courage of those fighting. What we are still missing are people in charge with other men who are, I won't say more capable, but certainly more honest. We Italians can be first in the field instead of having to be

content with being at the service of our *ally*, Germany. We dislike the Germans very much, however. It is better to leave the subject at any rate for the time being.'

After the fall of Bardia this same young man, aged 24, who considered that he had wasted at least half those years, said, 'Better not speak of the Press and the influence its stupid propaganda has had on the masses. The least these fools who direct the Press and radio deserve is to be put against a wall and shot—in the back. But these people are only voices, voices paid by those above who have the monopoly, but there are many other people deserving of this fate. It matters little if the poor Italian people have to foot the bill, poor sheep, they never complain. How often have they been shorn in the name of Italy and willingly submitted to the operation! In the meantime the ambitious mania for glory, for greatness, for riches, satisfies the dishonest pastors, always in the name of a greater, stronger Italy. But one day this flock of lambs will turn and hit. Not for nothing have they been suckled by the she-wolf of Rome.'

*Friday, May 1st, Rabbits!* The morning spent with Honey tanks, and their crews which, these men say, they prefer to bigger types for their manœuvrability. 'We did well enough in them last time. We just want the same opportunities.' In the way that the desert has, the rest of the day rather fizzled out, for it takes so long to get from one place to another and we were not too sure of the compass.

Many of these men have their pet animals, and I heard about a camp being entrenched especially that a favourite tortoise should not be able to wander far from its home.

I returned suffering from an appalling headache due to constipation. Out of shyness I had not visited the excessively public conveniences and had hoped in vain for an opportunity later during the day when I could find somewhere to retire to more discreetly. At best these desert latrines are encased by a transparent flapping sacking which reaches as high as a man's waist, through which the occupants can be only too clearly seen silhouetted, sitting like Buddhas, oblivious of the world around them—but for the stranger this lack of privacy is somewhat alarming, and I felt a kindred sympathy for the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, who, I believe, died as a result of not being able to face the lavatory on a Continental train.

We lunched with the Long Range Desert Group, the highwaymen of the desert; these men are making a legend for themselves with their highly scientific adventures, as brightly coloured as any pirate story. Patrolling the desert ocean in armoured vehicles equipped with radios, they traverse miles behind the enemy's lines, taking him by surprise at night, burning army lorries, destroying tanks, and blowing up other equipment—making their presence felt to the Germans in many other unpleasant ways. Sometimes these patrols take the men out into the desert for months on end. But although this life cannot be other than romantic, these men do not wish to be considered so. Many of them come from all walks of life—chauffeurs, bricklayers, policemen, professional soldiers. They drill in the heat of the day with a precision and smartness as if they were outside Wellington Barracks Square. The officers are serious; critical, and do not indulge in that rather childlike ragging, easy laughter and small jokes which wile away the time in so many messes. They seem censorious of frivolousness, and uninterested in small talk. A most impressive lot, stern and sagacious. Their Colonel quizzes you with screwed-up eyes, obviously taking in a great deal more than he gives out to strangers. The lunch was magnificent; the usual bully beef was disguised as a series of fritters, and there was a tremendous platter of brilliantly coloured vegetables, unlike anything that we had seen in the desert, though many of them came out of a tin.

Clump, clump, clump, came the heavy steps of a returned Patrol Commander. Bearded, covered with sand, matted hair on end, bloodshot eyes, sunburned so that the white shining teeth were his most brilliant feature, the warrior returned. The other officers welcomed him with enthusiasm, as if he had returned from short leave. 'Had a good time?' 'Everything go well?' but perhaps on account of the stranger in their midst, no one asked questions, everything was taken quietly as a matter of course, yet, undoubtedly, this man had come across tremendous excitements, and had a lurid tale to tell.

This is a war of machines and technical efficiency which allows little scope for individual escapades by groups of men, but the very specialized form of warfare that the Long Range Desert Group have perfected is an exception, and is one which the Germans, thus far, have ignored or have not dared. The

Commander of this most recent expedition, after he had eaten his lunch, took us round to see his men. They, too, had had their meal and were now being given the mail from home, that had arrived in their absence. A stranger, more grotesquely assorted, more frightening looking bunch of chaps it would be hard to imagine. Covered in dust, with bloodshot eyes and strange headdresses, with matted beards and half-naked bodies, they had no affinity with the world of today: they were like primæval warriors, or timeless inhabitants of a remote hemisphere. One apparition with ginger matting for hair, ginger beard and red eyes staring from a blue-grey dusty face, looked no more human than an ape. Another man who, before the war, had been a professional swimmer, muscular, with a lime green turban on his head, chuckled as he read aloud to his friends a letter saying: 'I cannot wait until after the war, when we can get married and live together for always.'

★ ★ ★ ★

Many soldiers, instead of visiting the big cities, move by the sea, to stay at a rest camp bathing, and playing tennis on a hard court improvised out of the sand. But the ideal of these men, their terrestrial paradise, the realization of the mirage that the wanderer in the desert sees trembling in the distance always before him, is to be found among these thousands of square miles of this purposeless, incomprehensible desert. Here in a magic circle of green fertility is the most westerly of the oases of the Arabian Desert, the oasis of Siwa.

Only the traveller arriving by the ancient caravan route taken by Alexander the Great, three hundred and thirty years before Christ, can appreciate fully the miracle of coming suddenly upon such phenomena as hills, minarets and towers, bubbling emerald pools, streams, date palms, limes, grapes, olives, and other trees of extraordinary feathery richness. This seems an enchanted spot; it possesses a childlike quality of serenity. The old city of pinnacles is the apotheosis of a small boy's mud pie empire. It affects the more sophisticated visitor in the same way as does the fantastic architecture of the postman Cheval at Haûterives, who built himself, in the South of France, a mud palace that is now beloved of all surrealists. Many of these towers, built thousands of years before Christ, still remain. A few are but lately fallen. The old

city resembles the Tower of Babel as one imagines it after its fall. The new city of the same mud-coloured material consists of an extraordinary honeycomb of terraces and steel inclines built into the hillside. The local Berbers, who speak a language of their own and yet also understand Arabic, by their secretive-ness and furtiveness, create the impression that the town is deserted, for only a child is seen running out of a white doorway, soon to retreat in haste and alarm. Since the dropping of a few stray bombs by the Italians, many of the inhabitants have been driven to live in the caves in the rocky hills. When the draped women are seen walking with vast loads on their heads they look like tanagra figures. Some of them wear crescent moon rings in their noses; their draperies and shawls have been dipped in the brightest dyes. The labourers in white with egg-shell caps on their heads walk nonchalantly beside the bulkily laden white mules. They tread delicately along the white rocks, past the streams and trees that throw a dark pattern of fan-like shadows on the white ground. The Governor is popular, and prouder of the mosque built in celebration of the visit of King Fuad—a strange anachronism in this timeless spot—than of the magnificently proportioned chamber built for the visit of Alexander. The Syrian doctor, the favourite of everyone, presides over the hospital. Mrs. Hillier, the Siwan lady who by marrying an English Captain has become a living legend, standing tight to the wall behind the door, had arrayed a mass of silver wares on a table for our inspection. Siwa has comparatively few visitors, so that their advent is an occasion, when Mrs. Hillier hurries round to collect from her friends the chastity necklaces of beaten silver, bracelets and rings, engraved with fish and palm trees, and other jewellery of amber and scarlet shells, in an effort to do a little bargaining.

The Ammonium, or Temple of Jupiter Ammon, where Alexander consulted the oracle, is still a most impressive sight. This noble pile of white masonry is as incomprehensible in its way as Stonehenge, for its white stones are almost on the same scale. The painted cornice frieze of the Ptolemaic period is still in good condition, and the effect against the blue sky in the afternoon sun is dazzling.

Life is very pleasant here: almost a living enchantment with the bathing in the pools where the water is aerated

so that your body is covered with little bubbles as you swim. The young men perform native dances that are curious. The Allied soldiers and airmen who find themselves here soon become affected by the idyllic atmosphere of the place. They acquire a serenity for which, perhaps, the pools or the cool shadows of the branches may be responsible. Or is it on account of the rare benefits gained here from the sun, which, burning them to a deeper mahogany brown, possesses a higher percentage of violet ray than elsewhere in the desert?

Using as a wash-house a small pool by the side of Cleopatra's Pool, a few soldiers, looking as if covered in a liquid clay, soaped themselves and scrubbed themselves, and scrubbed and soaped one another, and whooping with delight, shouted and smacked each other. Then they ran headlong over the sides of the big, circular pool, and dived with a frisking kick into its aerated waters. Up they came to the surface entirely transformed, their hair and bodies of a different colour. They performed aquabatics in the warm water, they dived in, again and again, in every attitude, and, unconsciously, composed an extraordinary Byzantine frieze along the side of the pool against the silver palm trees, their dripping hair and bodies bronzed by the sun.

This effervescent water is itself so warm that even, in the heat of the day, one felt quite cold by contrast when coming out into the air. With catcalls and song, the bathing continued. The last particles of sand and dust were washed away, and enjoyment was complete at being back here.

Suddenly the Arab servant shut all doors and looked terrified. 'Italians,' he cried. The Doctor beckoned us to his shelter, dug deep into the rocky mountain side. But why? For what? At a tremendous height in the brilliant blue sky above, one solitary Italian aircraft was flying backwards and forwards on a reconnaissance trip. The aircraft was soon out of sight, yet the natives, since a few indiscriminate bombs have lately been dropped here, have taken to living in the rock tombs in the hills, and here they remain cowering for the rest of the afternoon, terrified and disbelieving it to be safe for them to come out immediately the aircraft departed. 'Come out!'—the Doctor poked his head in at some of the caves, and pulled out a posse of giggling, wriggling women with rings in their noses and faces shrouded in vividly-dyed shawls. The women were like a lot of old hens, jostling

and squirming together, embarrassed, coy and rather revolting. The Doctor asked: 'You want to see some pretty children? Let's visit the rich man in the "new" town.' We saw a donkey being led into the house, being kicked out and followed by geese, hens and chickens. We sat on a parapet in the evening sun waiting for the rich man to bring in his children. The usual Arab delays. Eventually the children appeared. The girls of about three and five, hung with masses of silver jwelleries and ornaments—two little Jezebels with their eyes lined with khol, their elaborate hairdress consisting of thousands of tightly plaited wisps of hair, wearing shawls of striped yellows, red and blue. The rich man now showed us the gardens. Under the palm trees a carpet is laid on the ground. With ceremony the landlord invites us to sit and to taste the four different brews of tea in minute blue glasses. He invites us to pick the apricots or dates. He would invite us to take a pomegranate only at this season the trees are in flower. The blossoms look like japonica. The landlord is the rich man of the quarter, and his children are decorated like idols. But most of the inhabitants of Siwa are poor. Once this oasis was a sea; the bubbling salt pools now are legacies of this sea. By springs and artesian wells the water is brought to the surface from a depth of three and five hundred feet below the sand, making the earth salty and the vegetation non-productive of variety. The Siwans gain their livelihood from the oil of the olive or the dates from the palm trees. Most of them are employed now in the gardens picking the fruit, which is forthwith packed into boxes in the factory near by. But if the Siwans are poor, they seem to have acquired the secret of perpetual happiness.

But the clock ticked on and more Arab delays made us late for our aeroplane. When at last the tea arrived, it was tasted by the rich man, but he sent it away again. I became restless and impatient, for we had promised the pilot to return before dark. At last we gulped a cup of mint tea, but bolted before we accepted the other varieties that were being brewed. We must hurry to the aircraft or darkness would overtake us *en route* for home.

The pilot was asleep on the wing of the aircraft. He had become tired of waiting. When our aeroplane took off and we circled an 'adieu', as the palm trees whirled beneath our

windows and the mud pinnacles pivoted in eddies, we felt loath to leave the mirage for the reality of the skies. We went back over the desert, along the caravan route supposedly taken by Cambyses, the great Persian conqueror of Egypt, when he was on his way to consult the oracle which had foretold his death, and his army of fifty thousand were overwhelmed by a sand-storm, leaving no trace behind them.

The sun was a red rose of fire low on the horizon. It sank fast, leaving a legacy of pink haze in the sky, bright enough to enable me to read awhile. The transition from daylight to night is very abrupt here. Could we get back before dark? I was reading Bagnold's book on the sands of the desert in the back of the aircraft when I felt an increase of sound in my ears. I swallowed many times, and then looking up from the page I noticed the shapes of dune formations below us appeared larger. We had lost a great deal of height, and were now quite close to the sand. Derek's watch showed we had at least another half-hour's flying before we were due to arrive. Why was the aircraft weaving and dipping about down so low? Suddenly a rat-tat-tat of machine-gun fire put the fear of God into us. Heavens! We banked this way and that, then swooped down within a few feet of the ground. Something was after us? From our turret we looked around everywhere. Nothing to be seen. The headphones were not connected and we could not get in touch with the pilot. Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat. We again heard the machine-gun fire and looked at one another significantly. This was horrible. My heart was pounding. I thought, 'Well, we've been just a bit too clever. Our day has been lovely, but it hasn't come off. We've got an unseen enemy popping at us out of the dusk, and here in our glass blister we are incapable of retaliating. No parachutes! So we are caught. That's too bad for my mother, for the book that I would have liked to have done which nevertheless would have been another damned book—these were the things that passed through my mind in a flash. Should we false and? Could we lie for protection under the wing? How about jumping now? It did not look far to fall, better than being burnt. But there was no more machine-gun fire and we regained height. On the fly-leaf of my book I wrote, 'What's the matter?' and passed it along through the fuselage to the pilot. He shook his head deprecatingly. When half an hour later we landed, in the

dim twilight the pilot said, 'Sorry to give you such a fright. I'm going up forward at dawn, and I just wanted to test my guns. Should have told you.' I suppose I should have known that if an enemy had been after us we would not have heard his machine-gun fire.

Back at the luxury mess of Bagush. I realized why certain people would prefer to come here for their leave than go back to Cairo. The desert gives one an equanimity which is soon broken up in the horrible restlessness of the dragoman-tourist-pavement atmosphere of Cairo.

For dinner the quartermaster had ornamented an elaborate trifle with circles of nuts. It was a triumph.

One of the worst aspects of desert life is the men's lack of reading matter. Most of the troops are working conscientiously at their tedious labours, but much of their time necessarily must be spent 'hanging about being bored'. A good deal more could be done to provide the men with books or magazines of interest. In the whole of the Middle East there is a shortage of books (such a thing as a Bædeker is not anywhere procurable). The paper shortage is worse than it is in England, and transport cannot be spared for large quantities of books. But it would be of help if each man travelling to the East took with him one volume, for only an infinitesimal proportion of books find their way into the desert camps. I have seen men voraciously reading books, no matter the subject, merit or author. Randolph Churchill worked wonders by inaugurating *World's Press Review* in a week —more should be done along this line, for no effort should be spared to relieve the boredom of the desert.

Cairo demands too little of a man. The desert demands too much. No one can remain for long in either place. For the life in the desert is, in its way, as unnatural as that of Cairo. A false reality prevails. This unnatural habitat for a human being makes a big difference in the end. It is possible to dominate your surroundings for a certain length of time only. After many months it is impossible not to become mentally limp, though physically so healthy.

The friendliness existing between the highest ranks and the lowest, the hospitality and the opportunities to get to know people well in certain exterior ways are aids to counterbalance the ugliness of desert life.

Many people spend their days in the desert wondering what it is they most desire on their leave: luxury, comfort, food, sex life, or a drunken time. Neville, who is captain of an armoured car, told me that in the desert he was continuously frightened. During a patrol, for all hours of daylight, he must watch the enemy through field-glasses. He would be lucky if he could snatch a cup of tea during the entire day. Sometimes when the order came through on their wireless set to advance further, the strain became almost unbearable. Yet an indication of fright is the one thing that must never be seen. One man showing alarm can contaminate a whole group of men. If, to his officer, one of the men says quickly, 'What's that over there?' the officer must never open an eye just that little much wider that indicates shock. He must maintain a complete calm. If one of his men says, 'I can't go on', the officer must answer incredulously, 'What do you mean?' He must pretend that it takes him some little time before he understands the man's plight, that he is so utterly confident himself that it is an impossibility that anyone should be incapable of carrying on. Neville said that a certain type of man, often brawny and tough in appearance, when frightened, becomes absolutely hysterical. When a man whimpers, 'My nerve's gone, sir', nothing remains but to send him away. Heretofore a discharged soldier whose nerves are shattered would be sent back to Cairo, which, in spite of its disadvantages, is nevertheless an alluring inducement to some men to weaken. Now, however, the waverers are sent to a desert camp where the advantages over the battlefield are not so great.

Neville said that whenever he heard the troops discussing the future, he found that their one desire, no matter how poor their conditions had been, was that life, for them, after the war should be exactly the same as it used to be. They did not want any 'better world': they dreamed only of the old days. He said many of the men in the Army became irritated with the incessant R.A.F. communiqués about patrols and raids made each day and night without any mention of Army activity. For the effect upon the public, and the services alike, was an idea that the Army was idle, at a standstill, though all the time dangerous sorties were being made on a large scale, that compared well with the work of the other Services. Neville thought our R.A.F. men poor at reconnaissance in comparison to the Germans, and often the enemy

were not where they were reported to be. The Germans had the information, so that they knew exactly how and where to strike. Neville thought the ordinary German soldier was instinctively no less frightened, no more efficient, than ours, but that the officers had been infinitely more flexible and intelligent in dealing with them. He smiled confidently, 'You know, until last month I believe our army felt the Germans were bogies, that they couldn't be beaten. In the great withdrawal we couldn't retreat fast enough, and there was a certain amount of pandemonium. One officer had got so lost that he had to ask a quartermaster where he was. Now things are different. We all believe this time it'll be non-stop to Benghazi, and the most encouraging sign of all is the number of young men now occupying important positions in the army.'

Neville told me how for months his men had perched on a little hill facing the enemy. They had come to think of it as 'their' hill, but one day the Germans brought up a big gun and forced them to retreat a bit. In the excitement one of Neville's men left behind an enamel plate. When later the fortunes of war changed, and we were able to throw the Germans back from the hillock, we found a little pile of German magazines on top of which was the plate bearing the message, 'You left this behind you.—Fritz.'

# THE TWO AMERICAS

EUDORA WELTY

## I—THE WIDE NET

[A STORY]

WILLIAM WALLACE JAMIESON's wife Hazel was going to have a baby. But this was October, and it was six months away, and she acted exactly as though it would be tomorrow. When he came in the room she would not speak to him, but would look as straight at nothing as she could, with her eyes glowing. If he only touched her she stuck out her tongue or ran round the table. So one night he went out with two of the boys down the road and stayed out all night. But that was the worst thing yet, because when he came home in the early morning Hazel had vanished. He went through the house not believing his eyes, balancing with both hands out, his yellow cowlick rising on end, and then he turned the kitchen inside out looking for her, but it did no good. Then when he got back to the front room he saw she had left him a little letter in an envelope. That was doing something behind someone's back. He took out the letter, pushed it open, held it out at a distance from his eyes. . . . After one look he was scared to read the exact words, and he crushed the whole thing in his hand instantly, but what it had said was that she could not put up with him after that and was going to the river to drown herself.

'Drown herself . . . but she's in mortal fear of the water!'

He ran out front, his face red like the red of the picked cotton field he ran over, and down in the road he gave a loud shout for Virgil Thomas, who was just going in his own house, to come out again. He had almost got in, he had one foot inside the door.

They met half-way between the farms, under the shade tree.

'Haven't you had enough of the night?' asked Virgil. There they were, their pants all covered with the dust and dew, and they had had to carry the third man home flat between them.

'I've lost Hazel, she's vanished, she went to drown herself.'

'Why, that ain't like Hazel,' said Virgil.

William Wallace reached out and shook him. 'You heard me. Don't you know we have to drag the river?'

'Right this minute?'

'You ain't got nothing to do till spring.'

'Let me go set foot inside the house and speak to my mother and tell her a story and I'll come back.'

'This will take the wide net,' said William Wallace. His eyebrows gathered, and he was talking to himself.

'How come Hazel to go and do that way?' asked Virgil as they started out.

William Wallace said, 'I reckon she got lonesome.'

'That don't argue—drown herself for getting lonesome! My mother gets lonesome.'

'Well,' said William Wallace. 'It argues for Hazel.'

'How long is it now since you and her was married?'

'Why, it's been a year.'

'It don't seem that long to me. A year!'

'It was this time last year. It seems longer,' said William Wallace, breaking a stick off a tree in surprise. They walked along, kicking at the flowers on the road's edge. 'I remember the day I seen her first and that seems a long time ago. She was coming along the road holding a little frying-size chicken from her grandma under her arm, and she had it real quiet. I spoke to her with nice manners. We knowed each other's names, being bound to, just didn't know each other to speak to.'

'I says, "Where are you taking the fryer?" and she says, "Mind your manners," and I kept on till after a while she says, "If you want to walk me home take littler steps." So I didn't lose time. It was just four miles across the field and full of blackberries, and from the top of the hill there was Dover below, looking sizeable-like and clean, spread out between the two churches like that. When we got down, I says to her, "What kind of water's in this well?" and she says, "The best water in the world." So I drew a bucket and took out a dipper and she drank and I drank. I didn't think it was that remarkable, but I didn't tell her.'

'What happened that night?' asked Virgil.

'We ate the chicken,' said William Wallace, 'and it was tender.'

Of course that wasn't all they had. The night I was trying their table out, it sure had good things to eat from one end to the other. Her mamma and papa sat at the head and foot and we was face to face with each other across it with, I remember, a pat of butter between. They had real sweet butter with a tree drawed down it, elegant-like. Her mamma eats like a man. I had brought her a whole hatful of berries and she didn't even pass them to her husband. Hazel, she would leap up and take a pitcher of new milk and fill up the glasses. I had heard how they couldn't have a singing at the church without a fight over her.'

'Oh, she's a pretty girl, all right,' said Virgil. 'It's a pity for the ones like her to grow old, and get like their mothers.'

'Another thing will be that her mother will get wind of this and come after me,' said William Wallace.

'Her mother will eat you alive,' said Virgil.

'She's just been watching her chance,' said William Wallace. 'Why did I think I could stay out all night?'

'Just something come over you.'

'First it was just a carnival at Carthage, and I had to let them guess my weight . . . and after that . . .'

'It was nice to be sitting on your neck in a ditch singing,' prompted Virgil, 'there in the moonlight. And playing on the harmonica like you can play.'

'Even if Hazel did sit home knowing I was drunk that wouldn't kill her,' said William Wallace. 'What she knows ain't ever killed her yet . . . She's smart too for a girl,' he said.

'She's a lot smarter than her cousins in Beula,' said Virgil. 'And especially Edna Earle, that never did get to be what you'd call a heavy thinker. Edna Earle could sit and ponder all day on how the little tail of the "C" got through the "L" in a Coca-Cola sign.'

'Hazel is smart,' said William Wallace. They walked on. 'You ought to see her pantry shelf—it looks like a hundred jars when you open the door. I don't see how she could turn around and jump in the river.'

'It's a woman's trick.'

'I always behaved before. Till the one night—last night.'

'Yes, but the one night,' said Virgil. 'And she was waiting to take advantage.'

'She jumped in the river because she was scared to death of

the water and that was to make it worse,' he said. 'She remembered how I used to have to pick her up and carry her over the oak-log bridge, how she'd shut her eyes and make a dead-weight and hold me round the neck, just for a little creek. I don't see how she brought herself to jump.'

'Jumped backward,' said Virgil. 'Didn't look.'

When they turned off it was still early in the pink and green fields. The fumes of morning, sweet and bitter, sprang up where they walked. The insects ticked softly, their strength in reserve; butterflies chopped the air, going to the east, and the birds flew carelessly and sang by fits and starts, not the way they did in the evening, in sustained and drowsy songs.

'It is a pretty day for sure,' said William Wallace. 'It's a pretty day for it.'

'I don't see a sign of her ever going along here,' said Virgil.

'Well,' said William Wallace, 'she wouldn't have dropped anything. I never saw a girl to leave less signs of where she's been.'

'Not even a plum seed,' said Virgil, kicking the grass.

In the grove it was so quiet that once William Wallace gave a jump, as if he could almost hear a sound of himself wondering where she had gone. A descent of energy came down on him in the thick of the woods and he ran at a rabbit and caught it in his hands.

'Rabbit . . . rabbit . . .' He acted as if he wanted to take it off to himself and hold it up and talk to it. He laid a palm against its pulsing heart. 'Now . . . there now . . .'

'Let her go, William Wallace, let her go.' Virgil, chewing on an elderberry whistle he had just made, stood at his shoulder. 'What do you want with a live rabbit?'

William Wallace squatted down and set the rabbit on the ground, but held it under his hand. It was a little, old, brown rabbit. It did not try to move. 'See there?'

'Let her go.'

'She can go if she wants to, but she don't want to.'

Gently he lifted his hand. The round eye was shining at him sideways in the green gloom.

'Anybody can freeze a rabbit that wants to,' said Virgil. Suddenly he gave a far-reaching blast on the whistle, and the rabbit went in a streak. 'Was you out catching cottontails or

was you out catching your wife?' he said, taking the turn to the open fields. 'I come along to keep you on the track.'

'Who'll we get now?' They stood on top of a hill and William Wallace looked critically over the countryside. 'Any of the Malones?'

'I was always scared of the Malones,' said Virgil. 'Too many of them.'

'This is my day with the net, and they would have to watch out,' said William Wallace. 'I reckon some Malones and the Doyles will be enough. The six Doyles and their dogs, and you and me, and two little nigger boys is enough, with just a few Malones.'

'That ought to be enough,' said Virgil, 'no matter what.'

'I'll bring the Malones and you bring the Doyles,' said William Wallace, and they separated at the spring.

When William Wallace came back, with a string of Malones just showing behind him on the hilltop, he found Virgil with the two little Rippen boys waiting behind him, solemn little tow-heads. As soon as he walked up, Grady, the one in front, lifted his hand, as if to signal silence and caution to his brother Brucie, panting merrily and untrustworthily behind him.

Brucie bent readily under William Wallace's hand-pat and gave him a dreamy look out of the tops of his round eyes, which were pure green-and-white, like clover tops. William Wallace gave him a nickel. Grady hung his head; his white hair lay in a little tail in the nape of his neck.

'Let's let them come,' said Virgil.

'Well, they can come then, but if we keep letting everybody come it is going to be too many,' said William Wallace.

'They'll appreciate it, those little old boys,' said Virgil. Brucie held up at arm's length a long red thread with a bent pin tied on the end; and a look of helpless and intense interest gathered Grady's face like a drawstring; his eyes, one bright with a sty, shone pleadingly under his white bangs, and he snapped his jaw and tried to speak . . . 'Their papa was drowned in the Pearl River,' said Virgil.

There was a shout from the gully.

'Here come all the Malones,' cried William Wallace. 'I askcd four of them would they come, but the rest of the family invitcd themselves.'

'Did you ever see a time when they didn't?' said Virgil. 'And yonder from the other direction come the Doyles, still with biscuit crumbs on their checks, I bet, now it's nothing to do but eat, as their mother said.'

'If two little niggers would come along now, or one big nigger,' said William Wallace. And the words were hardly out of his mouth when two little Negro boys came along, going somewhere, one behind the other, stepping high and gay in their overalls, as though they waded through honeydew to the waist.

'Come here, boys. What's your names?'

'Sam and Robbie Bell.'

'Come along with us, we're going to drag the river.'

'You hear that, Robbie Bell?' said Sam.

They smiled.

The Doyles came noiselessly, their dogs made all the fuss. The Malones, eight giants with great long black eyelashes, were already stamping the ground and pawing one another, ready to go. Everybody went up together to see Doc.

Old Doc owned the wide net. He had a house on top of the hill and he sat and looked out from a rocker on the front porch.

'Climb the hill and come in!' he began to intone across the valley. 'Harvest's over . . . slipped up on everybody . . . cotton's picked, gone to the gin . . . hay cut . . . molasses made around here . . . Big explosion's over, supervisors elected, some pleased, some not . . . We're hearing talk of war!'

When they got closer he was saying, 'Many's been saved at revival, twenty-two last Sunday, including a Doyle, ought to be counted two. Hope they'll be a blessing to Dover community besides a shining star in Heaven. Now what?' he asked, for they had arrived and stood gathered in front of the steps.

'If nobody else is using your wide net could we use it?' asked William Wallace.

'You just used it a month ago,' said Doc. 'It ain't your turn.'

Virgil jogged William Wallace's arm and cleared his throat. 'This time is kind of special,' he said. 'We got reason to think William Wallace's wife Hazel is in the river, drowned.'

'What reason have you got to think she's in the river drowned?' asked Doc. He took out his old pipe. 'I'm asking the husband.'

'Because she's not in the house,' said William Wallace.

'Vanished?' and he knocked out the pipe.

'Plum vanished.'

'Of course a thousand things could have happened to her,' said Doc, and he lighted the pipe.

'Hand him up the letter, William Wallace,' said Virgil. 'We can't wait around till Doomsday for the net while Doc sits back thinkin'.'

'I tore it up, right at the first,' said William Wallace. 'But I know it by heart. It said she was going to jump straight in the Pearl River and that I'd be sorry.'

'Where do you come in, Virgil?' asked Doc.

'I was in the same place William Wallace sat on his neck in, all night, and done as much as he done, and come home the same time.'

'You-all were out cuttin' up, so Lady Hazel has to jump in the river, is that it? Cause and effect. Anybody want to argue with me? Where do these others come in, Doyles, Malones, and what not?'

'Doc is the smartest man around,' said William Wallace, turning to the stolidly waiting Doyles, 'but it sure takes time.'

'These are the ones that's collected to drag the river for her,' said Virgil.

'Of course I am not going on record to say so soon that I think she's drowned,' Doc said, blowing out blue smoke.

'Do you think . . .' William Wallace went up a step, and his hands both went into fists. 'Do you think she was *carried off*?'

'Now that's the way to argue, see it from all sides,' said Doc promptly. 'But who by?'

Some Malone whistled, but not so you could tell which one.

'There's no booger around the Dover section that goes around carrying off young girls that's married,' stated Doc.

'She was always scared of the gypsies.' William Wallace turned scarlet. 'She'd sure turn her ring around on her finger if she passed one, and look in the other direction so they couldn't see she was pretty and carry her off. They come in the end of summer.'

'Yes, there are the gypsies, kidnappers since the world began. But was it to be you that would pay the grand ransom?' asked Doc. He pointed his finger. They all laughed then at how clever

old Doc was and clapped William Wallace on the back. But that turned into a scuffle and they fell to the ground.

'Stop it, or you can't have the net,' said Doc. 'You're scaring my wife's chickens.'

'It's time we was gone,' said William Wallace.

The big barking dogs jumped to lean their front paws on the men's chests.

'My advice remains, Let well enough alone,' said Doc. 'Whatever this mysterious event will turn out to be, it has kept one woman from talking a while. However, Lady Hazel is the prettiest girl in Mississippi, a golden-haired girl; you've never seen a prettier one and you never will.' He got to his feet with the nimbleness that was always his surprise, and said, 'I'll come along with you.'

The path they always followed was the Old Natchez Trace. It took them through the deep woods and led them out down below on the Pearl River, where they could begin dragging it upstream to a point near Dover. They walked in silence round William Wallace, not letting him carry anything, but the net dragged heavily and the buckets were full of clatter in a place so dim and still.

Once they went through a forest of cucumber trees and came upon a high ridge. Grady and Brucie, who were running ahead all the way, stopped in their tracks; a whistle had blown, and far down and far away a long freight train was passing. It seemed like a little festival procession, moving with the slowness of ignorance or a dream, from distance to distance, the tiny pink and grey cars like secret boxes. Grady was counting the cars to himself, as if he could certainly see each one clearly, and Brucie watched his lips, hushed and cautious, the way he would watch a bird drinking. Tears suddenly came to Grady's eyes, but it could only be because a tiny man walked along the top of the train, walking and moving on top of the moving train.

They went down again and soon the smell of the river spread over the woods, cool and secret. Every step they took among the great walls of vines and among the passion-flowers started up a little life, a little flight.

'We're walking along in the changing-time,' said Doc. 'Any day now the change will come. It's going to turn from hot to cold, and we can kill the hog that's ripe and have fresh meat

to eat. Come one of these nights and we can wander down here and tree a nice possum. Old Jack Frost will be pinching things up. Old Mr. Winter will be standing in the door. Hickory tree there will be yellow. Sweet-gum red, hickory yellow, dogwood red, sycamore yellow.' He went along rapping the tree trunks with his knuckle. 'Magnolia and live oak never die. Remember that. Persimmons will all get fit to eat, and the nuts will be dropping like rain all through the woods here. And run, little quail, run, for we'll be after you too.'

They went on and suddenly the woods opened upon light, and they had reached the river. Everyone stopped, but Doc talked on ahead as though nothing had happened. 'Only today,' he said, 'today, in October sun, it's all gold—sky and tree and water. Everything just before it changes looks to be made of gold.'

William Wallace looked down as though he thought of Hazel with the shining eyes, sitting at home and looking straight before her, like a piece of pure gold, too precious to touch.

Below them the river was glimmering, narrow, soft and skin-coloured, and slowed nearly to stillness. The shining willow trees hung round them. The net that was being drawn out, so old and so long-used, it too looked golden, strung and tied with golden threads.

Standing still on the bank, all of a sudden William Wallace, on whose word they were waiting, spoke up in a voice of surprise. 'What is the name of this river?'

They looked at him as if he were crazy not to know the name of the river he had fished in all his life. But a deep frown was on his forehead, as if he were compelled to wonder what people had come to call this river, or to think there was a mystery in the name of a river they all knew so well, the same as if it were some great far torrent of waves that dashed through the mountains somewhere, and almost as if it were a river in some dream, for they could not give him the name of that.

'Everybody knows Pearl River is named the Pearl River,' said Doc.

A bird note suddenly bold was like a stone thrown into the water to sound it.

'It's deep here,' said Virgil, and jogged William Wallace. 'Remember?'

William Wallace stood looking down at the river as if it were still a mystery to him. There under his foot which hung over the bank it was transparent and yellow like an old bottle lying in the sun, filling with light.

Doc clattered all his paraphernalia.

Then all of a sudden all the Malones scattered jumping and tumbling down the bank. They gave their loud shout. Little Brucie started after them, and looked back.

'Do you think she jumped?' Virgil asked William Wallace.

Since the net was so wide when it was all stretched, it reached from bank to bank of the Pearl River, and the weights would hold it all the way to the bottom. Juglike sounds filled the air, splashes lifted in the sun, and the party began to move upstream. The Malones with great groans swam and pulled near the shore, the Doyles swam and pushed from behind with Virgil to tell them how to do it best; Grady and Brucie with his thread and pin trotted along the sandbars hauling buckets and lines. Sam and Robbie Bell, naked and bright, guided the old oarless row-boat that always drifted at the shore, and in it, sitting up tall with his hat on, was Doc—he went along without ever touching water and without ever taking his eye off the net. William Wallace himself did everything, but most of the time he was out of sight, swimming about under water or diving, and he had nothing to say any more.

The dogs chased up and down, in and out of the water and in and out of the woods.

'Don't let her get too heavy, boys,' Doc intoned regularly every few minutes, 'and she won't let nothing through.'

'She won't let nothing through, she won't let nothing through,' chanted Sam and Robbie Bell, one at his front and one at his back.

The sandbars were pink or violet drifts ahead. Where the light fell on the river, in a wandering from shore to shore, it was leaf-shaped spangles that trembled softly, while the dark of the river was calm. The willow trees leaned overhead and their trailing leaves hung like waterfalls in the morning air. The thing that seemed like silence must have been the endless cry of all the crickets and locusts in the world, rising and falling.

Every time William Wallace took hold of a big eel that slipped the net, the Malones all yelled, 'Rassle with him, son!'

'Don't let her get too heavy, boys,' said Doc.

'This is hard on catfish,' William Wallace said once.

There were big and little fishes, dark and light, that they caught, good ones and bad ones, the same old fish.

'This is more shoes than I ever saw got together in any store,' said Virgil when they emptied the net to the bottom. 'Get going!' he shouted in the next breath.

The little Rippens, who had stayed ahead in the woods stayed ahead on the river. Brucie, leading them all, made small jumps and hops as he went, sometimes on one foot, sometimes on the other.

The winding river looked old sometimes, when it ran wrinkled and deep under high banks where the roots of trees hung down, and sometimes it seemed to be only a young creek, shining with the colours of wildflowers. Sometimes sandbars in the shapes of fishes lay nose to nose, without the track of even a bird.

'Here comes some alligators,' said Virgil. 'Let's let them by.'

They drew out on the shady side of the water, and three big alligators and four middle-sized ones went by, taking their own time.

'Look at their great big old teeth!' called a shrill voice. It was Grady making his only outcry, and the alligators were not showing their teeth at all.

'The better to eat folks with,' said Doc from his boat, looking at him severely.

'Doc, you are bound to declare all you know,' said Virgil. 'Get going!'

When they started off again the first thing they caught in the net was the baby alligator.

'That's just what we wanted!' cried the Malones.

They set the little alligator down on a sandbar and he squatted perfectly still; they could hardly tell when it was he started to move. They watched with set faces his incredible mechanics, while the dogs after one bark stood off in inquisitive humility, until he winked.

'He's ours!' shouted all the Malones. 'We're taking him home with us!'

'He ain't nothing but a little old baby,' said William Wallace.

The Malones only scoffed, as if he might be only a baby but he looked like the oldest and worst lizard.

‘What are you going to do with him?’ asked Virgil.

‘Keep him.’

‘I’d be more careful what I took out of this net,’ said Doc.

‘Tie him up and throw him in the bucket,’ the Malones were saying to one another, while Doc was saying, ‘Don’t come running to me and ask me what to do when he gets big.’

They kept catching more and more fish, as if there was no end in sight.

‘Look, a string of lady’s beads,’ said Virgil. ‘Here, Sam and Robbie Bell.’

Sam wore them round his head, with a knot over his forehead and loops round his ears, and Robbie Bell walked behind and stared at them.

In a shadowy place something white flew up. It was a heron and it went away over the dark treetops. William Wallace followed it with his eyes and Brucie clapped his hands, but Virgil gave a sigh, as if he knew that when you go looking for what is lost everything is a sign.

An eel slid out of the net.

‘Rassle with him, son!’ yelled the Malones. They swam like fiends.

‘The Malones are in it for the fish,’ said Virgil.

It was about noon that there was a little rustle on the bank.

‘Who is that yonder?’ asked Virgil, and he pointed to a little undersized man with short legs and a little straw hat, who was following along on the other side of the river.

‘Never saw him and don’t know his brother,’ said Doc.

Nobody had ever seen him before.

‘Who invited you?’ cried Virgil hotly. ‘Hi . . . !’ and he made signs for the little undersized man to look at him, but he would not.

‘Looks like a crazy man from here,’ said the Malones.

‘Just don’t pay any attention to him and maybe he’ll go away,’ advised Doc.

But Virgil had already swum across and was up on the other bank. He and the stranger could be seen exchanging a word apiece and then Virgil put out his hand the way he would pat a

child and patted the man to the ground. The little man got up again just as quickly, lifted his shoulders, turned round, and walked away with his hat tilted over his eyes.

When Virgil came back he said, 'Little old man claimed he was harmless as a baby. I told him to just try horning in on this river and anything in it.'

'What did he look like up close?' asked Doc.

'I didn't study how he looked,' said Virgil. 'But I don't like anybody to come looking at me that I am not familiar with.' And he shouted, 'Get going!'

'Things are moving in too great a rush,' said Doc.

Brucie darted ahead and ran looking into all the bushes, lifting up the branches and peeping underneath.

'Not one of the Doyles has spoke a word,' said Virgil.

'That's because they're not talkers,' said Doc.

All day William Wallace kept diving to the bottom. Once he dived down and down into the dark water, where it was so still that nothing stirred, not even a fish, and so dark that it was no longer the muddy world of the upper river but the dark clear world of deepness, and he must have believed this was the deepest place in the whole Pearl River, and if she was not here she would not be anywhere. He was gone such a long time that the others stared hard at the surface of the water, through which the bubbles came from below. So far down and all alone, had he found Hazel? Had he suspected down there, like some secret, the real, the true trouble that Hazel had fallen into, about which words in a letter could not speak . . . how (who knew?) she had been filled to the brim with that elation that they all remembered, like their own secret, the elation that comes of great hopes and changes, sometimes simply of the harvest time, that comes with a little course of its own like a tune to run in the head, and there was nothing she could do about it—they knew—and so it had turned into despair? It could be nothing but the old trouble that William Wallace was finding out, reaching and turning in the gloom of such depths.

'Look down yonder,' said Grady softly to Brucie.

He pointed to the surface, where their reflections lay colourless and still side by side. He touched his brother gently as though to impress him.

'That's you and me,' he said.

Brucie swayed precariously over the edge, and Grady caught him by the seat of his overalls. Brucie looked, but showed no recognition. Instead, he backed away, and seemed all at once unconcerned and spiritless and pressed the nickel William Wallace had given him into his palm, rubbing it into his skin. Grady's inflamed eyes rested on the brown water. Without warning he saw something . . . perhaps the image in the river seemed to be his father, the drowned man—with arms open, eyes open, mouth open . . . Grady stared and blinked, again something wrinkled up his face.

And when William Wallace came up it was in an agony from submersion, which seemed an agony of the blood and of the very heart, so woeful he looked. He was staring round in astonishment, as if a long time had gone by, away from the pale world where the brown light of the sun and the river and the little party watching him trembled before the eyes.

'What did you bring up?' somebody called—was it Virgil?

One of his hands was holding fast to a little green ribbon of plant, root and all. He was surprised and let it go.

It was afternoon. The trees spread softly, the clouds hung wet and tinted. A buzzard turned a few slow wheels in the sky, and drifted upward. The dogs promenaded the banks.

'It's time we ate fish,' said Virgil.

On a wide sandbar on which seashells lay they dragged up the haul and built a fire.

Then for a long time among clouds of odours and smoke, all half-naked except Doc, they cooked and ate catfish. They ate until the Malones groaned and all the Doyles stretched out on their faces, though for long after Sam and Robbie Bell sat up to their own little table on a cypress stump and ate on and on. Then they all were silent and still and one by one fell asleep.

'There ain't a thing better than fish,' muttered William Wallace. He lay stretched on his back in the glimmer and shade of trampled sand. His sunburned forehead and cheeks seemed to glow with fire. His eyelids fell. The shadow of a willow branch dipped and moved over him. 'There is nothing in the world as good as . . . fish. The fish of Pearl River.' Then slowly he smiled. He was asleep.

But it seemed almost at once that he was leaping up, and one

by one up sat the others in their ring and looked at him, for it was impossible to stop and sleep by the river.

‘You’re feeling as good as you felt last night,’ said Virgil, setting his head on one side.

‘The excursion is the same when you go looking for your sorrow as when you go looking for your joy,’ said Doc.

But William Wallace answered none of them anything, for he was leaping all over the place and all over them and the feast and the bones of the feast, trampling the sand, up and down, and doing a dance so crazy that he would die next. He took a big catfish and hooked it to his belt-buckle and went up and down, so that they all hollered, and the tears of laughter streaming down his cheeks made him put his hand up, and the two days’ growth of beard began to jump out, bright red.

But all of a sudden there was an even louder cry, something almost like a cheer, from everybody at once, and all pointed fingers moved from William Wallace to the river. In the centre of three light-gold rings across the water was lifted first an old hoary head (‘It has whiskers!’ a voice cried) and then in an undulation, loop after loop and hump after hump of a long dark body, until there were a dozen rings of ripples, one behind the other, stretching all across the river, like a necklace.

‘The King of the Snakes!’ cried all the Malones at once, in high tenor voices and leaning together.

‘The King of the Snakes,’ intoned old Doc, alone in his profound bass.

‘He looked you in the eye.’

William Wallace stared back at the King of the Snakes with all his might.

It was Brucie that darted forward, dangling his little thread with the pin tied to it, going toward the water.

‘That’s the King of the Snakes!’ cried Grady, who always looked after him.

Then the snake went down.

The little boy stopped with one leg in the air, spun around on the other, and sank to the ground.

‘Git up,’ Grady whispered. ‘It was just the King of the Snakes. He went off whistling. Git up. It wasn’t a thing but the King of the Snakes.’

Brucie’s green eyes opened, his tongue darted out, and he

sprang up; his feet were heavy, his head light, and he rose like a bubble coming to the surface.

The thunder like a stone loosened and rolled down the bank.

They all stood unwilling on the sandbar, holding the net. In the eastern sky were the familiar castles and the round towers to which they were used, grey, pink, and blue, growing darker and filling with thunder. Lightning flickered in the sun along their thick walls. But in the west the sun shone with such a violence that in an illumination like a long-prolonged glare of lightning the heavens looked black and white; all colour left the world, the goldenness of everything was like a memory, and only heat, a kind of glamour and oppression, lay on their heads. The thick heavy trees on the other side of the river were brushed with mile-long streaks of silver, and a wind touched each man on the forehead. At the same time there was a very long roll of thunder that began behind them, came up and down mountains and valleys of air, passed over their heads, and left them listening still. With a small, near noise a mocking bird followed it, the little white bars of its body flashing over the willow trees.

'We are here for a storm now,' Virgil said. 'We will have to stay until it's over.'

They retreated a little, and hard drops fell in the leathery leaves at their shoulders and about their heads.

'Magnolia's the loudest tree there is in a storm,' said Doc.

Then the light changed the water, until all about them the woods in the rising wind seemed to grow taller and blow inward together and suddenly turn dark. The rain struck heavily. A huge tail seemed to lash through the air and the river broke in a wound of silver. In silence the party crouched and stooped beside the trunk of the great tree, which in the push of the storm rose full of a fragrant and unyielding weight. Where they all stared, past their tree was another tree, and beyond that another and another, all the way down the bank of the river, all towering and darkened in the storm.

'The outside world is full of endurance,' said Doc. 'Full of endurance.'

Robbie Bell and Sam squatted down low and embraced each other from the start.

'Runs in our family to get struck by lightnin',' said Robbie

Bell. 'Lightnin' drawed a pitchfork right on our grandpappy's cheek, stayed till he died. Pappy got struck by some bolts of lightnin' and was dead three days, dead as that-there axe.'

There was a succession of glares and crashes.

'This'n's goin' to be either me or you,' said Sam. 'Here come a little bug. If he go to the left, it's me, and to the right, it's you.'

But at the next flare a big tree on the hill seemed to turn into fire before their eyes, every branch, twig, and leaf, and a purple cloud hung over it.

'Did you hear that crack?' asked Robbie Bell, 'That were its bones.'

'Why do you little niggers talk so much!' said Doc. 'Nobody's profiting by this information.'

'We always talks this much,' said Sam, 'but now everybody so quiet, they hears us.'

The great tree, split and on fire, fell roaring to earth. Just at its moment of falling, a tree like it on the opposite bank split wide open and fell in two parts.

'Hope they ain't goin' to be no balls of fire come rollin' over the water and fry all the fishes with they scales on,' said Robbie Bell.

The water in the river had turned purple and was filled with sudden currents and whirlpools. The little willow trees bent almost to its surface, bowing one after another down the bank and breaking under the storm. A great curtain of wet leaves was borne along before a blast of wind, and every human being was covered.

'Now us got scales,' wailed Sam. 'Us is the fishes.'

'Shut up, little old coloured children,' said Virgil. 'This isn't the way to act when somebody takes you out to drag a river.'

'Poor lady's ghost, I bet it is scareder than us,' said Sam.

'All I hoping is, us don't find her!' screamed Robbie Bell.

William Wallace bent down and knocked their heads together. After that they clung silently in each other's arms, the two black heads resting with wind-filled cheeks and tight-closed eyes one upon the other, until the storm was over.

'Right over yonder is Dover,' said Virgil. 'We've come all the way. William Wallace, you have walked on a sharp rock and cut your foot open.'

In Dover it had rained and the town looked somehow like new. The wavy heat of late afternoon came down from the water tank and fell over everything like shiny mosquito-netting. At the wide place where the road was paved and patched with tar it seemed newly embedded with Coca-Cola tops. A few wet wagons and cars stood like a sparkling puzzle down the middle of the street. The old circus posters on the store were nearly gone, only bits, the snowflakes of white horses, clinging to its side. Morning-glory vines started almost visibly to grow over the roofs and cling round the ties of the railroad track, where bluejays lighted on the rails, and umbrella chinaberry trees hung heavily over the whole town dropping their first fall berries on to the tin roofs.

Each with his counted fish on a string, the members of the river-dragging party walked through the town. They went toward the town well, and there was Hazel's mother's house, but no sign of her yet, coming out. They all drank a dipper of the water, and still there was not a soul on the street. Even the bench in front of the store was empty.

But something told them somebody had come, for after one moment people began to look out of the store and out of the post office. All the bird dogs woke up so see such a large number of men and boys materialize suddenly with such a big catch of fish, and they ran out barking. The bluejays flashed up from the track and screeched above the town, whipping through their tunnels in the chinaberry trees. In the café a nickel clattered inside a music-box and a love song began to play. The whole town of Dover began to throb in its wood and tin, like an old tired heart, when the men walked through once more, coming around again and going down the street carrying the fish, so drenched, exhausted, and muddy that no one could help but admire them.

William Wallace walked through the town as though he did not see anybody or hear anything. Yet he carried his great string of fish held high where it could be seen by all. Virgil came next, imitating William Wallace exactly, then the modest Doyles crowded by the Malones, who were holding up their alligator, tossing it in the air, even, like a father tossing his child. Following behind and pointing authoritatively at the ones in front strolled Doc, with Sam and Robbie Bell still chanting in his wake. In and out of the whole little line Grady and Brucie jerked about.

Grady, with his head ducked, and stiff as a rod, walked with a springy limp; it made him look forever angry and unapproachable. Under his breath he was whispering, 'Sty, sty, git out of my eye, and git on somebody passing by.' He travelled on with narrowed shoulders, and kept his eye unerringly upon his little brother, wary and at the same time proud, as though he held a flying June bug on a string. Brucie, making a twanging noise with his lips, had shot forth again, and he was darting rapidly everywhere at once, delighted and tantalized, running in circles round William Wallace pointing to his fish. A frown of pleasure like the print of a bird's foot was stamped between his faint brows, and he trotted in some unknown realm of delight.

'Did you ever see so many fish?' said the people in Dover.

'How much are your fish, mister?'

'Would you sell your fish?'

'Is that all the fish in Pearl River?'

'How much you sell them all for? Everybody's?'

'Three dollars,' said William Wallace suddenly.

The Malones were upon him and shouting, but it was too late.

And just as William Wallace was taking the money in his hand, Hazel's mother walked solidly out of her front door and saw it.

'You can't head her mother off,' said Virgil. 'Here she comes in full bloom.'

But William Wallace turned his back on her, and on them all, for that matter, and that was the breaking-up of the party.

Just as the sun went down, Doc climbed his back steps, sat in his chair on the back porch where he sat in the evenings, and lighted his pipe. William Wallace hung out the net and came back and Virgil was waiting for him, so they could say good-evening to Doc.

'All in all,' said Doc, when they came up, 'I've never been on a better river-dragging, or seen better behaviour. If it took catching catfish to move the Rock of Gibraltar, I believe this outfit could move it.'

'We didn't catch Hazel Jamieson,' said Virgil.

'What did you say?' asked Doc.

'He don't really pay attention,' said Virgil, 'I said, "We didn't catch Hazel".'

'Who says she was to be caught?' asked Doc. 'She wasn't in there. Girls don't like the water—remember that. Girls don't just haul off and go jumping in rivers to get back at their husbands. They got other ways.'

'Didn't you ever think she was in there?' asked William Wallace.

'Not once,' said Doc.

'He's just smart,' said Virgil, putting his hand on William Wallace's arm. 'It's only because we didn't find her that he wasn't looking for her.'

'I'm beholden to you for the net, anyway,' said William Wallace.

'You're welcome to borry it again,' said Doc.

On the way home Virgil kept saying, 'Calm down, calm down, William Wallace.'

'If he wasn't such an old skinny man I'd have wrung his neck for him,' said William Wallace. 'He had no business coming.'

'He's too big for his britches,' said Virgil. 'Don't nobody know everything. And just because it's his net. Why does it have to be his net?'

'If it wan't for being polite to old men, I'd have skinned him alive,' said William Wallace.

'I guess he don't really know nothing about wives at all; his wife's so deaf,' said Virgil.

'He don't know Hazel,' said William Wallace. 'I'm the only man alive knows Hazel: would she jump in the river or not, and I say she would. She jumped in because I was sitting on the back of my neck in a ditch singing, and that's just what she ought to done. Doc ain't got no right to say one word about it.'

'Calm down, calm down, William Wallace,' said Virgil.

'If it had been you that talked like that I'd have broke every bone in your body,' said William Wallace. 'Just let you talk like that. You're my age and size.'

'But I ain't going to talk like that,' said Virgil. 'What have I done the whole time but keep this river-dragging going straight and running even, without no hitches? You couldn't have drug the river a foot without me.'

'What are you talking about!' cried William Wallace. 'This wasn't your river-dragging! It wasn't your wife!' He jumped on Virgil and they began to fight.

'Let me up.' Virgil was breathing heavily.

'Say it was my wife. Say it was my river-dragging.'

'Yours!' Virgil was on the ground with William Wallace's hand putting dirt in his mouth.

'Say it was my net.'

'Your net!'

'Get up then.'

They walked along getting their breath. On a hill William Wallace looked down, and at the same time there went drifting by the sweet sounds of music outdoors. They were having the Sacred Harp Sing on the grounds of an old white church glimmering there at the crossroads, far below. He stared away as if he saw it minutely, as if he could see a lady in white take the flowered cover off the organ, which was set on a little slant in the shade, dust the keys, and start to pump and play . . . He smiled faintly, as he would at his mother, and at Hazel, and at the singing women in his life, now all one young girl standing up to sing under the trees the oldest and longest ballads there were.

Virgil told him good-night and went into his own house and the door shut on him.

When he got to his own house, William Wallace saw to his surprise that it had not rained at all. But there, curved over the roof, was something he had never seen before as long as he could remember, a rainbow at night. In the light of the moon, which had risen again, it looked small and of gauzy material, like a lady's summer dress, a faint veil through which the stars showed.

He went up on the porch and in at the door, and all exhausted he had walked through the front room and through the kitchen when he heard his name called. After a moment he smiled, as if no matter what he might have hoped for in his wildest heart, it was better than that to hear his name called out in the house. The voice came out of the bedroom.

'What do you want?' he yelled, standing stock-still.

Then she opened the bedroom door with the old complaining creak and there she stood. She was not changed a bit.

'How do you feel?' he said.

'I feel pretty good. Not too good,' Hazel said, looking mysterious.

'I cut my foot,' said William Wallace, taking his shoe off to show the blood.

'How in the world did you do that?' she cried, with a step back.

'Dragging the river. But it don't hurt any longer.'

'You ought to have been more careful,' she said. 'Supper's ready and I wondered if you would ever come home, or if it would be last night all over again. Go and make yourself fit to be seen,' she said, and ran away from him.

After supper they sat on the front steps a while.

'Where were you this morning when I came in?' asked William Wallace when they were ready to go in the house.

'I was hiding,' she said. 'I was still writing on the letter. And then you tore it up.'

'Did you watch me when I was reading it?'

'Yes, and you could have put out your hand and touched me, I was so close.'

But he bit his lip and gave her a little tap and slap and then turned her up and spanked her.

'Do you think you will do it again?' he asked.

'I'll tell my mother on you for this!'

'Will you do it again?'

'No!' she cried.

'Then pick yourself up off my knee.'

It was just as if he had chased her and captured her again. She lay smiling in the crook of his arm. It was the same as any other chase at the end.

'I will do it again if I get ready,' she said. 'Next time will be different too.'

Then she was ready to go in and rose up and looked out from the top step, out across the yard where the chinaberry tree was, and beyond, into the dark fields where the lightning-bugs flickered away. He climbed to his feet too and stood beside her, with the frown on his face, trying to look where she looked. And after a few minutes she took him by the hand and led him into the house, smiling as if she were smiling down on him.

# HENRY MILLER

## II—SOIRÉE IN HOLLYWOOD

*Fragment from 'The Air-conditioned Nightmare'*

ALL of which reminds me of my first evening in Hollywood. It was so typical that I almost thought it had been arranged for me. But it all happened accidentally. By sheer chance I found myself rolling up to the home of a millionaire in a handsome black Packard. I had been invited to dinner by a perfect stranger. I didn't even know my host's name. Nor do I know it now.

The first thing that struck me on being introduced all around was that I was in the presence of wealthy people, people who were bored to death and who were all, including the octogenarians, already three sheets in the wind. The host and hostess seemed to take pleasure in acting as bartenders. It was hard to follow the conversation because everybody was talking at cross purposes. The important thing was to get an edge on before sitting down to table. One old geezer who had recently recovered from a horrible automobile accident was having his fifth old-fashioned—he was proud of the fact, proud that he could swill it like a youngster even though he was still partially crippled. Every one thought he was a marvel.

There wasn't an attractive woman about, except the one who had brought me to the place. The men looked like business men, except for one or two who looked like aged strike-breakers. There was one fairly young couple, in their thirties, I should say. The husband was a typical go-getter, one of those ex-football players who go in for publicity or insurance or the stock market, some clean all-American pursuit in which you run no risk of soiling your hands. He was a graduate of some Eastern University and had the intelligence of a high-grade chimpanzee.

That was the set-up. When every one had been properly soused, dinner was announced. We seated ourselves at a long table, elegantly decorated, with three or four glasses beside each plate. The ice was abundant, of course. The service began, a dozen flunkeys buzzing at your elbow like horse flies. There was a surfeit of everything; a poor man would have had sufficient with the

*hors-d'œuvre* alone. As they ate they became more discursive, more argumentative. An elderly thug in a tuxedo, who had the complexion of a boiled lobster, was railing against Labour agitators. He had a religious strain, much to my amazement, but it was more like Torquemada's than Christ's. President Roosevelt's name almost gave him an apoplectic fit. Roosevelt, Bridges, Stalin, Hitler—they were all in the same class to him. That is to say, they were anathema. He had an extraordinary appetite, which served, it seemed, to stimulate his adrenal glands. By the time he had reached the meat course he was talking about hanging being too good for some people. The hostess, meanwhile, who was seated at his elbow, was carrying on one of those delightful inconsequential conversations with the person opposite her. She had left some beautiful dachshunds in Biarritz, or was it Sierra Leone, and, to believe her, she was greatly worried about them. In times like these, she was saying, people forgot about animals. People can be so cruel, especially in time of war. Why, in Pekin the servants had run away and left her with forty trunks to pack—it was outrageous. It was so good to be back in California. God's own country, she called it. She hoped the war wouldn't spread to America. Dear me, where was one to go now? You couldn't feel safe anywhere, unless you went into the desert.

The ex-football player was talking to someone at the far end of the table in a loud voice. It happened to be an Englishwoman and he was insulting her roundly and openly for daring to arouse sympathy for the English in this country. 'Why don't you go back to England?' he shouted at the top of his voice. 'What are you doing here? You're a menace. We're not fighting to hold the British Empire together. You're a menace. You ought to be expelled from the country.'

The woman was trying to say that she was not English but Canadian, but she couldn't make herself heard above the din.

The octagenarian, who was now sampling the champagne, was talking about the automobile accident. Nobody was paying any attention to him. Automobile accidents are too common—every one at the table had been in a smash-up at one time or another. One doesn't make a point about such things unless one is feeble-minded.

The hostess was clapping her hands frantically—she wanted to tell us a little story about an experience she had had in Africa once.

'Oh, the hell with that story!' shouted the football player. 'I want to know why this great country of ours, in the most crucial moment of her history, is so divided.'

'Shut up, please!' screamed the hostess. 'You're drunk.'

'That makes no difference,' came his booming voice. 'I want to know if we're all hundred per cent Americans—and if not, why not? I suspect that we have some traitors in our midst,' and because I hadn't been taking part in any of the conversation he gave me a fixed, drunken look which was intended to make me declare myself. All I could do was to smile. That seemed to infuriate him. His eyes roved about the table challengingly and, finally, sensing an antagonist worthy of his mettle, rested on the aged, Florida-baked strike-breaker. The latter was at that moment quietly talking to the person beside him about his good friend, Cardinal So-and-So. He, the Cardinal, was always very good to the poor, I heard him say. A very gentle, hard-working man, but he would tolerate no nonsense from the dirty Labour agitators who were stirring up revolution, fomenting class hatred, preaching anarchy. The more he talked about his holy eminence, the Cardinal, the more he foamed at the mouth. But his rage in no way affected his appetite. He was carnivorous, bibulous, querulous, cantankerous and poisonous as a snake. One could almost see the bile spreading through his varicose veins. He was a man who had spent millions of dollars of the public's money to help the needy, as he put it. What he meant was to prevent the poor from organizing and fighting for their rights. Had he not been dressed like a banker, he would have passed for a hod carrier. When he grew angry he not only became flushed, but his whole body quivered like guava. He became so intoxicated by his own venom that finally he overstepped the bounds and began denouncing President Roosevelt as a crook and a traitor, among other things. One of the guests, a woman, protested. That brought the football hero to his feet. He said that no man could insult the President of the United States in his presence. The whole table was soon in an uproar. The flunkey at my elbow had just filled the huge liqueur glass with some marvellous cognac. I took a sip and sat back with a grin, wondering how it would all end. The louder the altercation, the more peaceful I became. '*How do you like your new boarding-house, Mr. Smith?*' I heard President McKinley saying to his secretary. Every night, Mr. Smith, the President's private secretary, used to visit

Mr. McKinley at his home and read aloud to him the amusing letters which he had selected from the daily correspondence. The President, who was overburdened with affairs of State, used to listen silently from his big armchair by the fire; it was his sole recreation. At the end he would always ask: '*How do you like your new boarding-house, Mr. Smith?*' He was so worn out by his duties that he couldn't think of anything else to say at the close of these séances. Even after Mr. Smith had left his boarding-house and taken a room at a hotel, President McKinley continued to say, '*How do you like your new boarding-house, Mr. Smith?*' Then came the Exposition, and Csolgosz, who had no idea what a simpleton the President was, assassinated him. There was something wretched and incongruous about murdering a man like McKinley. I remember the incident only because that same day the horse that my aunt was using for a buggy ride got the blind staggers and ran into a lamp-post, and when I was going to the hospital to see my aunt, extras were out already and, young as I was, I understood that a great tragedy had befallen the nation. At the same time I felt sorry for Csolgosz—that's the strange thing about the incident. I don't know why I felt sorry for him, except that in some vague way I realized that the punishment meted out to him would be greater than the crime merited. Even at that tender age I felt that punishment was criminal. I couldn't understand why people should be punished—I don't yet. I couldn't even understand why God had the right to punish us for our sins. And of course, as I soon realized, God doesn't punish us—we punish ourselves.

Thoughts like these were floating through my head when suddenly I became aware that people were leaving the table. The meal wasn't over yet, but the guests were departing. Something had happened while I was reminiscing. Pre-civil war days, I thought to myself. Infantilism rampant again. And if Roosevelt is assassinated they will make another Lincoln of him. Only this time the slaves will still be slaves. Meanwhile I overhear some one saying what a wonderful President Melvyn Douglas would make. I prick up my ears. I wonder do they mean Melvyn Douglas the movie star? Yes, that's who they mean. He has a great mind, the woman is saying. And character. And *savoir faire*. Thinks I to myself 'and who will the vice-president be, may I ask? Shure and it's not Jimmy Cagney you're thinkin' of?' But the woman

is not worried about the vice-presidency. She was at a palmist the other day and she learned some interesting things about herself. Her life line was broken. 'Think of it,' she said, 'all these years and I never knew it was broken. What do you suppose is going to happen? Does it mean war? Or do you think it means an accident?'

The hostess was running about like a wet hen. Trying to rustle up enough hands for a game of bridge. A desperate soul, surrounded by the booty of a thousand battles. 'I understand you're a writer,' she said, as she tried to carom from my corner of the room to the bar. 'Won't you have something to drink—a highball or something? Dear me, I don't know what's come over everybody this evening. I do hate to hear these political discussions. That young man is positively rude. Of course I don't approve of insulting the President of the United States in public, but just the same he might have used a little more tact. After all, Mr. So-and-So is an elderly man. He's entitled to some respect, don't you think? Oh, there's So-and-So!' and she dashed off to greet a cinema star who had just dropped in.

The old geezer, who was still tottering about, handed me a high-ball. I tried to tell him that I didn't want any, but he insisted that I take it anyway. He wanted to have a word with me, he said, winking at me as though he had something very confidential to impart.

'My name is Harrison,' he said. 'H-a-r-r-i-s-o-n,' spelling it out as if it were a difficult name to remember.

'Now what is your name, may I ask?'

'My name is Miller—M-i-l-l-e-r,' I answered, spelling it out in Morse for him.

'Miller! why that's a very easy name to remember. We had a druggist on our block by that name. Of course, *Miller*. Yes, a very common name.'

'So it is,' I said.

'And what are you doing out here, Mr. Miller? You're a stranger, I take it?'

'Yes,' I said, 'I'm just a visitor.'

'You're on business, are you?'

'No, hardly. I'm just visiting California.'

'I see. Well, where do you come from—the Middle West?'

'No, from New York.'

'From New York City? Or from up State?'

'From the City.'

'And have you been here very long?'

'No, just a few hours.'

'A few hours? My, my . . . well that's interesting. Very interesting. And will you be staying long, Mr. Miller?'

'I don't know. It depends.'

'I see. Depends on how you like it here, is that it?'

'Yes, exactly.'

'Well, it's a grand part of the world, I can tell you that. No place like California, I always say. Of course, I'm not a native. But I've been out here almost thirty years now. Wonderful climate. And wonderful people too.'

'I suppose so,' I said, just to string him along. I was curious to see how long the idiot would keep up this infernal nonsense.

'You're not in business, you say?'

'No, I'm not.'

'On a vacation, is that it?'

'No, not precisely. I'm an ornithologist, you see.'

'A what? Well, that's interesting.'

'Very,' I said with great solemnity.

'Then you may be staying with us for a while, is that it?'

'That's hard to say. I may stay a week and I may stay a year. It all depends. Depends on what specimens I find.'

'I see. Interesting work no doubt.'

'Very.'

'Have you ever been to California before, Mr. Miller?'

'Yes, twenty-five years ago.'

'Well, well, is that so? Twenty-five years ago! And now you're back again.'

'Yes, back again.'

'Were you doing the same thing when you were here before?'

'You mean ornithology?'

'Yes, that's it.'

'No, I was digging ditches then.'

'Digging ditches? You mean you were—digging ditches?'

'Yes, that's it, Mr. Harrison. It was either dig ditches or starve to death.'

'Well, I'm glad you don't have to dig ditches any more. It's not much fun—digging ditches, is it?'

'No, especially if the ground is hard. Or if your back is weak. Or vice versa. Or let's say your mother has just been put in the madhouse and the alarm goes off too soon.'

'I beg your pardon! What did you say?'

'If things are not just right, I said. You know what I mean—bunions, lumbago, scrofula. It's different now, of course. I have my birds and other pets. Mornings I used to watch the sun rise. Then I saddled the jackasses—I had two and the other fellow had three . . .'

'This was in California, Mr. Miller?'

'Yes, twenty-five years ago. I had just done a stretch in San Quentin . . .'

'San Quentin?'

'Yes, attempted suicide. I was really gaga, but that didn't make any difference to them. You see, when my father set the house afire one of the horses kicked me in the temple. I used to get fainting fits and then after a time I got homicidal spells and finally I became suicidal. Of course, I didn't know that the revolver was loaded. I took a pot-shot at my sister, just for fun, and luckily I missed her. I tried to explain it to the judge, but he wouldn't listen to me. I never carry a revolver any more. If I have to defend myself, I use a jack-knife. The best thing, of course, is to use your knee . . .'

'Excuse me, Mr. Miller, I have to speak to Mrs. So-and-So a moment. Very interesting what you say. Very interesting, indeed. We must talk some more. Excuse me just a moment . . .'

I slipped out of the house unnoticed and started to walk towards the foot of the hill. The highballs, the red and the white wines, the champagne, the cognac, were gurgling inside me like a sewer. I had no idea where I was, whose house I had been in or to whom I had been introduced. Perhaps the boiled thug was an ex-Governor of the State. Perhaps the hostess was an ex-movie star, a light that had gone out for ever. I remembered that some one has whispered in my ear that So-and-So had made a fortune in the opium traffic in China. Lord Haw-Haw probably. The Englishwoman with the horse face may have been a prominent novelist—or just a charity worker.

I thought of my friend Fred, now Private Alfred Perlès, No. 13802023 in the 137th Pioneer Corps or something like that. Fred would have sung the Lorelei at the dinner table or

asked for a better brand of cognac or made grimaces at the hostess. Or he might have asked for the telephone and called up Gloria Swanson, pretending to be Aldous Huxley or Chatto and Windus, Ltd. Fred would never have permitted the dinner to become a fiasco. Everything else failing he would have slipped his silky paw in some one's bosom, saying as he always did—'The left one is pretty good; fish it out!'

I think frequently of Fred in moving about the country. He was always so damned eager to see America. Arizona particularly. His picture of America was something like Kafka's. It would be a pity to disillusion him. And yet, who can say? He might enjoy it hugely. He might not see anything but what he wanted to see. I remember my visit to his own Vienna. Certainly it was not the Vienna I had dreamed of. And yet today, when I think of Vienna I see the Vienna of my dreams and not the one with bed bugs and broken zithers and stinking drains.

I wobble down the canyon road. It's very Californian somehow. I like the scrubby hills, the weeping trees, the desert coolness. I had expected more fragrance in the air.

The stars are out in full strength. Turning a bend in the road I catch a glimpse of the city below. The illumination is more *féerique* than in other American cities. The red seems to predominate. A few hours ago, towards dark, I had a glimpse of it from the bedroom window of the woman who owns the Packard. Looking at it through the glass it seemed even more magical than now. It was like looking into the future from the narrow window of an *oubliette*. Imagine the Marquis de Sade looking at the City of Paris through the bars of his cell in the Bastille. Los Angeles gives one the feeling of the future more strongly than any city I know of. A bad future, too, like something out of Fritz Lang's feeble imagination. *Good-bye, Mr. Chips!* Mussolini in his shirt sleeves draining the Mediterranean in order to make a new Atlantis.

Walking along one of the Neon-lit streets. A shop window with Nylon stockings. Nothing in the window but a glass leg filled with water and a seahorse rising and falling like a feather sailing through heavy air. Thus we see how Surrealism penetrates to every nook and corner of the world. Dali meanwhile is in Bowling Green, Va., thinking up a loaf of bread 30 feet high by 125 feet long, to be removed from the oven stealthily while

every one sleeps and placed very circumspectly in the main square of a big city, say Chicago or San Francisco. Just a loaf of bread, enormous of course. No *raison d'être*. No propaganda. And tomorrow night two loaves of bread, placed simultaneously in two big cities, say New York and New Orleans. Nobody knows who brought them or why they are there. And the next night three loaves of bread—one in Berlin or Bucharest this time. And so on, *ad infinitum*. Tremendous, what? Would push the war news off the front page. That's what Dali thinks, at any rate. Very interesting. Very interesting, indeed. Excuse me now, I have to talk to a lady over in the corner . . .

Tomorrow I will discover Sunset Boulevard. Eurhythmic dancing, ball-room dancing, tap dancing, artistic photography, ordinary photography, lousy photography, electro-fever treatment, internal douche treatment, ultra-violet ray treatment, elocution lessons, psychic readings, institute of religion, astrological demonstrations, hands read, feet manicured, elbows massaged, faces lifted, warts removed, fat reduced, insteps raised, corsets fitted, busts vibrated, corns removed, hair dyed, glasses fitted, soda jerked, hangover cured, headaches driven away, flatulence dissipated, business improved, limousines rented, the future made clear, the war made comprehensible, octane made higher and butane lower, drive in and get indigestion, flush the kidneys, get a cheap car-wash, stay-awake pills and go-to-sleep pills, Chinese herbs are very good for you and without a Coca-Cola life is unthinkable. From the car window it's like a stripper doing the St. Vitus dance—a corny one.

## SELECTED NOTICE

*British Romantic Art.* By John Piper. (Collins, Britain in Pictures Series. 4s. 6d. net.)

No subject has been more neglected than the history of English painting. A few pedestrian monographs on leading portrait painters so expensive that only the successful picture dealer can afford to buy them, a first-rate book on Turner, a careful life of Cotman, and one or two outstanding articles form the sum total of the British contribution to the analysis of British art. A popular summary must to some extent be handicapped by paucity of specialized material, and in the circumstances it is not surprising that Mr. Piper's *British Romantic Art* should give a muddled and inadequate account of the period

during which this country made its most significant (some people, no doubt, would say its only) contribution to the development of Western painting.

English romantic painting, for that is the true subject of Mr. Piper's book, is a difficult and complex study. Romantic elements in British painting there have always been. What, for example, could be more romantic than the literary connotation of Hilliard's *Lover* surrounded by the flames of passion? Than Riley's *Scullion* at Christ Church? Or Samuel Shelley's drawings? But it is obvious that British romantic art cannot be isolated by the application of a literary coefficient, and that romantic painting was a style evolved by certain artists in the early nineteenth century and not merely the aggregate of painting produced under the literary stimulus of the romantic movement.

The subject matter of romantic art may reveal, as Mr. Piper suggests at the beginning of his book, a preference for the particular. But its style was deliberately generalized. English romantic painting abrogated the conventions of the eighteenth century in favour of a method by which the artist could give free and uninhibited expression to his own personality. 'Trifles in nature', wrote Crome to Smart in 1816, 'must be overlooked that we may have our feelings raised by seeing the whole picture at a glance, not knowing how or why we are charmed', and Constable, after a visit to Eastlake's studio in 1831, carried the argument a stage further when he noted in a letter, 'This morning I have seen Eastlake's studies in Italy and Greece—temples, trees, statues, waterfalls, figures, etc. etc., excellent of their kind—and done wholly for the understanding, bald and naked—Nature divested of her chiaroscuro, which she never is under any circumstances, for we can see nothing without a medium.' In these sentences we have the basic preconceptions—emotional integrity, a new respect for medium and a preponderant anti-intellectual bias—which underlie British romantic art, and which give it a unity as great as and an importance far transcending that of French romantic painting.

Any definition of the terms of a stylistic period must be arbitrary. But for practical purposes romantic painting begins about 1790, when the classical conception of poetry and painting as 'sister arts' gave way before the theory of painting as an independent and self-consistent entity, and ends in 1844, when Etty's frescoes for the 'rustic octagon' in the garden of Buckingham Palace were displaced by Dyce's classicistic decorations. These dates witnessed a re-orientation of the entire trend of British art. In the 1780's Reynolds was telling his pupils to copy and copy and copy again. By 1830 Constable could affirm that 'it is melancholy to think of a man of such a mind and talent . . . pursuing the ghosts only of Titian and Giorgione, for who can catch themselves, at least by imitation of their habits, besides the mortification that they are only laughing at us for our folly'; Raphael seemed to a friend of Bonington, 'all brick colour'; Etty at about the same time could declare 'the colour of Michelangelo and Raphael much libelled. It frequently appears to me nearly all that it should be'; and Crome was criticising 'too picture effects' and 'some of our modern painters who mistake some of our great masters, because they sometimes put in some of those round characters of clouds, they must do the same.'

At root this intellectual revolution was the result of social change. None of the leading English landscape painters in the first half of the nineteenth century

reveals the slightest trace of social consciousness. Constable was no Courbet and Etty was no Géricault. But for the most part British romantic painters were men of limited pretensions with little visual education, and it was implicit in the style they practised that their works should be appreciated *sui generis* and not in relation to some distant past. Master X after Van Dyck, Miss Y after Albani, Claude's lakes, Cuyp's cows, Both's trees, all the paraphernalia of the aristocratic mannerism of the eighteenth century went by the board, leaving a style which may not have been revolutionary in a social sense, but which represented a lower social vision than any that preceded it.

The early biographies of the romantic artists seem to recognize this fact. Thornbury, for example, opens the second chapter of his Life of Turner with the extraordinary sentences: 'Tintoretto was the son of a dyer, Caravaggio was the son of a mason, Andrea del Sarto and the Carracci were the sons of tailors, Correggio of a labourer, Guido of a musician, Domenichino of a rope-maker, Albano of a silk mercer, so Turner had good precedent for being born the son of a barber—it was his only chance of being original: had he been a great man's son in that artificial age he might have grown up a third-rate imitator of Berghem or Hobbema, and have frittered away his life lounging in the galleries of Rome or Florence. But the hard necessity of earning bread put steel into his blood, made him a Titan for work, a lion for exertion, and filled him with an all-absorbing love of nature', and we have a record in Farington's *Journal* of an occasion in 1806, when Farington, Edridge and that arch snob Beaumont, spent an entire evening discussing 'the merits of Wilson as a landscape painter and the vicious practice of Turner and his followers'. In the same way Gilchrist, in his Life of Etty, makes it clear that Etty 'had in the course of his career small cause to be grateful to the higher circles for patronage. Throughout, the buyers of his pictures were nearly all of the middle class.' Indeed, one of the few romantic artists whose talent was appreciated by the aristocracy 'far more than those of his own rank' was De Wint, whose water-colours showed a reassuring resemblance to orthodox Dutch painting and who was specifically praised by Thackeray for 'avoiding all modern innovations'.

The story of British romantic art, therefore, is the story of the emancipation of English painting from a number of social factors which throughout the eighteenth century had precluded the development of any characteristically national style. Not that this is the impression left by Mr. Piper's book. To begin with Wilson and to end with Sickert, to devote two pages to Palmer and two lines to De Wint, to include Smetham, Pinwell ('a purely English genius') and John Martin, but to omit all reference to Bonington and Etty, is not a treatment calculated to bring out the course or scope of English painting. It is evident that Mr. Piper is seriously interested in British art. But when he writes another book he should remember that sloppy thinking and indiscriminate enthusiasms must be checked if English painting in a post-war world is to acquire the reputation it deserves.

JOHN POPE-HENNESSY

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